

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

May 30, 2022 Volume 26 Number 11



## Don't be afraid of your weaknesses

AMBS grads pointed to Moses' story  
for leadership lessons, pg. 13

## INSIDE

- The way is made by walking 4
- New congregations join MC Eastern Canada 20
- Art and inspiration at B.C. Women's Day 22

## EDITORIAL

# Hybrid church

BY VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER  
Executive editor



When you hear the words “church,” the first thing that pops into your head is probably not “tech team.” And yet, as we’ve lived through two years of pandemic worship, those folks operating the video camera, microphones and the Zoom controls have been vital to the church’s life together. The people managing the congregation’s YouTube channel and Facebook page have played important roles.

COVID-19 restrictions brought physical distancing to our congregations. During those times apart, we missed so much of what goes into being a church together. And yet, in the past two years, we have found new ways to connect—through technology.

Five years ago, you and I could not have imagined that sitting in front of a screen was how church would happen for months on end. But livestreamed and recorded worship services have helped us stay connected with each other, whether from the living room, the backyard or a cottage. Via technology some of us worshipped with congregations we were formerly a part of. Some have “visited” new congregations virtually, to see if they’re a good fit for ongoing involvement.

Virtual church activities have included people who, because of disabilities or illness, could not—even in pre-COVID times—be in the church’s physical space. Church committee meetings have become easier when committee members don’t have to scrape ice off the car and drive half an hour to a common

meeting spot. And speaking of driving, virtual meetings have cut down on transportation costs, both to our wallets and to the planet.

Now is a good time to publicly thank those people who have kept your congregation’s digital presence going during the past 26 months. Thank you to the church staff and lay leaders who acquired new tech skills even though “virtual church” was not in their job descriptions. And thanks to all of us for the patience and flexibility required when the technology sometimes failed.

Now, many congregations are meeting in person—and celebrating that happy reunion. Some are continuing with hybrid services, the combination of in-person and screen-mediated activities that has helped us stay involved during the pandemic.

Despite technology’s limitations, congregations and denominations are finding that their reach has expanded because of life in the virtual realm; technology has brought new opportunities for ministry. Now may not be the time to shut off the camera and retire the Zoom and YouTube accounts.

At the beginning of July, I plan to attend, virtually, the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Assembly, to be held in Indonesia, 11 hours away from my time zone. Many others from the global Anabaptist family will join via technology. Later that month, people from Mennonite Church Canada will take part in our first hybrid nationwide gathering. There’s still a chance for you to register for both. Check out MWC’s Indonesia 2022 at [mwc-cmm.org/stories/](http://mwc-cmm.org/stories/)

join-mwc-assembly-together- online. See more about MC Canada’s Gathering 2022 at [mennonitechurch.ca/gathering2022](http://mennonitechurch.ca/gathering2022).

Neither of these events will be the same as before. But we might discover new gifts, new opportunities for connecting in a hybrid way.

What if the church’s “new normal” is a hybrid reality? What would it look like if we continued to cultivate this new way of being church together?

- **We would invest** more dollars and energy into ongoing recruiting, training and supporting tech teams, recognizing their role in the church’s ministry.
- **Congregations would offer** practical help to people who would like to connect technologically but don’t have the knowledge or equipment to do so.
- **Pastors, elders and** deacons would keep finding new ways to offer pastoral care via phone, email, video conferencing and social media chats.
- **Churches’ Facebook groups** could be places for ongoing chats and conversations.
- **Congregations would make** sure their websites are up to date with calendar events, announcements, recorded services, and meeting guidelines.

How might our creativity and adaptability lead to new ways of being church in a new hybrid reality?

## New team member

This month we welcomed Daisy Belec to *CM’s* team, in the role of social media intern. Daisy is a student at Canadian Mennonite University and has an interest in communications and the church. This summer she’s working alongside Aaron Epp, *CM’s* online media manager. We’re happy to provide Daisy with a space in which to practice her skills, and we welcome the contributions she is making to *Canadian Mennonite*. ❧



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# CONTENTS

MAY 30, 2022 / VOL. 26, NO. 11

## ABOUT THE COVER:

The 2022 graduates of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., celebrate together by tossing their caps in the air in the seminary's library following the commencement service on April 30. See story on page 13.

PHOTO BY JASON BRYANT / AMBS

## Indigenous relations work revamped, reduced 14

"The governing body of Mennonite Church Canada has decided to end the full-time Indigenous-Settler Relations (ISR) position held by Steve Heinrichs and replace it with a new halftime position," senior writer **Will Braun** reports in his two-page news feature.

## Taking steps in 'courageous imagination' 18

"Mennonite Church Eastern Canada plants seeds for a new future," writes executive editor **Virginia A. Hostetler** in her report on the regional church's annual meeting.

## Music comes alive through synesthesia, art 24

A project by CMU student and instructor assigns colours to music performed by the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra.

## The way is made by walking 4

"In the letters to the early church there are many references to walking in love, walking by faith, walking in truth, and walking in darkness or light," writes Pastor **Kirsten Hamm-Epp**,



## Regular features:

For discussion 6 Readers write 7 Milestones 7  
A moment from yesterday 8 Schools Directory 28-29  
Online NOW! 30 Calendar 30 Classifieds 31

**When the 'grey' is not holy** Michael Pahl 8

**What holds us together?** Arli Klassen 9

**Going to the mountain** Anneli Loepp Thiessen 10

**'Godfidence' and confidence** Troy Watson 11

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## FEATURE

# The way is made by walking

By Kirsten Hamm-Epp

**L**ately I've had a lot of trouble concentrating. This past week I have spent far too many hours staring at my computer screen without much progress being made. When this happens, I find myself staring at my to-do list, expecting things to take care of themselves, and being surprised when, at the end of the day, I can't cross anything off that list.

What finally busted me out of my summer haze, though, were our squash plants. A while back, my husband Ian and I moved into our new house on the farm. The year I planted my first garden, I learned a few lessons:

- **Squash plants** are prickly.
- **If you plant** your pea fences too close together, they will grow together—and good luck getting at the peas in the middle!

- **If you plant** your squashes too close to your pea fences, they will climb the fence and attempt to pull it down. You'll have to prune them, and when you do, be careful because those suckers are prickly.
- **Maybe don't plant** all your lettuce and greens at once, unless you plan to eat like a rabbit for about two weeks.
- **Squash plants are**, believe it or not, surprisingly prickly.

The moral of the story is: When in the garden I should probably wear shoes. Or, I suppose, it could also have something to do with learning from mistakes.

Prickly squash plants aside, it was getting outside and getting some dirt under my nails that I needed to get my week back on track.

Our passage from Ephesians 4:1-16, which I really enjoy in the First Nations Version, reminds us that in life we are on a journey. At the end of that journey, we will be

mature human beings, no longer tossed about by the waves and following every voice we hear. We will walk the truth with Christ, the Chosen One, on the path of love.

But we have a bit of a way to go before we get there. We still make mistakes; we are not yet mature human beings fully reflecting Christ.

I borrowed the title for this sermon from Arthur Paul Boers's book on pilgrimage, *The Way is Made by Walking*. He writes about his pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago in Spain, walking 800 kilometres in 31 days. A significant kind of walk to go on! What I enjoyed most about the book was his openness about the challenges—the literal and metaphorical ups and downs of journeying that far.

As Boers walked those miles, sometimes alone, often with other pilgrim walkers, there were days the path was

**These gifts were given to prepare Creator's holy people for the work of helping others and to make the body of the Chosen One strong until we all follow the good road in harmony with each other... (Ephesians 4:12, First Nations Version).**

so intense it was all he could do to keep putting one foot in front of the other. On those days, he hoped no one would try to strike up a conversation. But then there were days when a comment from a stranger or view of a church on a hill would make him so absolutely certain of God's presence that he could not imagine being anywhere else. He sums up his journey this way, "It was incredibly hard, and very good."

## The meaning of walking

In Scripture walking is often used as a metaphor for faithful living. The Bible repeatedly reminds people to walk in God's ways: "Therefore, keep the commandments of the Lord your God, by walking in his ways and by fearing him" (Deuteronomy 8:6).

Isaiah 40:31: "But those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk



ISTOCK.COM PHOTO BY ZACHARY JUSTUS

## When we walk together, we are not only challenged to show Jesus to the ones beside us, we are also challenged to recognize Jesus within them. He is the way, the destination, the companion, and the nourishment.

*and not faint.”*

And in Micah we read: *“He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”*

In the letters to the early church there are many references to walking in love, walking by faith, walking in truth, and walking in darkness or light. These are references not to the physical act of putting one foot in front of the other but to the spiritual life of faith.

Walking is such a lovely metaphor for our faith. Augustine, one of the saints of the first century, said of God, “You made us for yourself, and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you.” From the

very beginning, Christians knew that there was a journey, a destination, and that our call was to walk faithfully towards it.

Hebrews 11 speaks of this destination: *“They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.”*

We are in the already-not-yet, living in a world we have been called to bless, but knowing that this world, this land, is not our home; it is not our final destination. This is a difficult path to walk; we have to pack the right things, something that comes easier to some than others.

I have family friends who go on a six- to eight-week trip every winter,

packing only what they can carry on their backs. They have packing down to a science, accounting for every square inch and ounce. They are also two people whose faith and faithful living I greatly admire.

Packing is a life skill. Ian and I were up in Missinipe for a four-day canoe trip last weekend and, for the first time ever, I think I packed just right. And it was not with a small amount of pride that I noticed that Ian and I were also the lightest packers of the group. (It’s the little victories in life!)

### **What to pack**

Packing also makes a nice metaphor for our spiritual walk. Ephesians tells us we

need a gentle and humble spirit, taking love, respect and peace along with us to walk faithfully. But, most importantly, on this path in the great circle of life, we need to make sure we pack bread and water—perhaps the most significant metaphors of all.

The Gospel reading today comes from John 6:24-35. At the start of the chapter is the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand, when he provides people with physical nourishment. But now he wants them to realize that he offers more important things: *“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”*

What Jesus offers endures forever. There is no expiry date, and it feeds us at our very core. It nourishes and sustains the image of God that exists in every one of us.

I once came across a quote that has stuck with me: “Look into the world, and you will find something of him who made it.” I think that holds especially true for us as people. We are the image-bearers of God. And in Jesus we have been given the bread and the drink we need to help that image grow and thrive within us.

What does it look like to walk as image-bearers of God? Ephesians 4:3 says: *“Let the Spirit weave you together in peace as you dance in step with one another in the great circle of life.”*

Leaving the jokes about Mennonites and dancing aside, I believe this passage is telling us that, as we walk towards the path of love, the way is ultimately made by walking together.

When we walk together, we are not only challenged to show Jesus to the ones beside us, we are also challenged to recognize Jesus within them. He is the way, the destination, the companion, and the nourishment. Life, our life, the life of the world—it all begins and ends with Christ.

Thank goodness, Christ knows full well our humanity. He knows our path will not be straight but will most likely look like a game of snakes and ladders.

Since I began writing this message I’ve been in my garden and have had a

few choice words for the squash plants because, funny thing, they’re still prickly, and I still wasn’t wearing gloves or shoes. But on this path of love, we walk toward a God who knows and loves us, whether we are on the path or need to be sent out to the garden for a wake-up call.

This is all part of the journey. Sometimes we find ourselves on the path, or in the weeds, sometimes we’re not 100 percent sure which direction we’re actually going in. But my encouragement to you is to keep putting one foot in front of the other and to walk. Walk literally, walk spiritually, walk with Christ and walk together.

I close with an adapted version of Hebrews 12:1: “Therefore friends, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud

of witnesses from Aberdeen, Osler and Warman Mennonite churches, let us throw off everything that hinders, and the judgments and differences that so easily entangle, and let us all together walk with perseverance the path that has been marked before us, following the footsteps of the loving Christ who sustains us every step of the way.” Amen. ✎



*Kirsten Hamm-Epp is the regional church minister for Mennonite Church Saskatchewan and is currently on parental leave. Adapted from a sermon she preached at a joint service of Aberdeen, Osler and Warman Mennonite churches, on Aug. 5, 2018.*

### ✎ For discussion

1. If you were planning a pilgrimage, a walk on an unfamiliar trail to think about life, where would you go? What would be the advantage of walking a traditional pilgrimage such as the Camino de Santiago in Spain? Would you make a pilgrimage on your own, or in company with someone?
2. If you were planning a long walk, what would you carry with you? What items can quickly grow heavy if the journey is long? How do you decide what to pack?
3. Kirsten Hamm-Epp identifies some things that are important to carry on a spiritual journey—love, respect and peace. What are some things that should be left behind? What is your best source of nourishment on your spiritual journey? What role do others play in your journey?
4. Many people enjoy walking where the beauty of nature is evident. What role does the created world play in your spiritual journey? What can we learn from the prickles on a bountiful squash plant?
5. Hamm-Epp writes, “Sometimes we find ourselves on the path, or in the weeds, sometimes we’re not 100 percent sure which direction we’re actually going in.” What scripture passages can be helpful in this situation?

—By Barb Draper

See related resources at  
[www.commonword.ca/go/2985](http://www.commonword.ca/go/2985)

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## ✎ Readers write

### ✉ Creation-care article praised by reader

**Re: “All of a sudden there’s buds on the trees,” May 2, page 16.**

This insightful article reveals a truth that has become increasingly recognized over the past years—that time spent outdoors improves learning by increasing the ability to be attentive and stay on task.

This is particularly important at a time when increasing numbers of children and youth are diagnosed with attention-deficit disorder and are placed on stimulant medications.

Being active in nature can be a wholesome form of “attention-restoration therapy,” which improves health on many levels. Power to earthkeepers!

PAUL THIESSEN, VANCOUVER

### ✉ Reader appreciates ‘excellent food for thought’ in *Canadian Mennonite*

**Re: “Reflection on Ukraine” column, May 2, page 9.**

*Canadian Mennonite* always has excellent food for thought, often of many flavours. May 2 was no exception.

In particular, it was easy for me to identify with Arlyn Friesen Epp’s well-written column. Besides sharing some of the cultural and historical tensions that must be common in the minds of many Mennonites, particularly those of us who are already somewhat older, he offered some suggestions which, if put to use, might just make our Christ-light shine a little brighter for others to see. I appreciated that.

ERIC UNGER, WINNIPEG

### ✉ ‘Identity politics’ further ‘societal polarization’

**Re: “Reader objects to terms used in *Canadian Mennonite*” letter, April 18, page 8.**

I agree with letter-writer Kevin McCabe and

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

would add that terms like “settler” are meaningless in the 21st century.

Neither my father and mother, grandfather and grandmother, great-grandfather and great-grandmother ever did any “settler” activities.

My perception is that these terms are used as political tools to further societal polarization using “identity” politics. If that’s not the intent, it is the result.

STEPHEN KENNEL (ONLINE COMMENT)

## ✎ Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Coursey**—Anna Rey Martens (b. April 23, 2022), to Heidi Martens and Joel Coursey, Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

### Baptisms

**Brooke Derksen, Cameron Derksen, Meagan Derksen, Joshua Derksen, Bryson Driedger, Nash Driedger, Evan Gualtieri, Lucas Pearson**—North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont., May 1, 2022.

### Deaths

**Andres**—Lillian, 94 (b. Aug. 10, 1927; d. Jan. 21, 2022), Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

**Dettweiler**—Joyce, 88 (b. April 2, 1934; d. April 22, 2022), Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

**Dyck**—Sarah, 100 (b. March 23, 1921; d. March 12, 2022), Morden Mennonite, Man.

**Dyck**—Victor, 87 (b. Sept. 28, 1934; d. April 26, 2022), Springstein Mennonite, Man.

**Ens**—Helene (Thiessen), 88 (b. Aug. 3, 1933; d. May 5, 2022), Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Friesen**—Anna, 93 (b. Jan. 1, 1929; d. March 30, 2022), Waterloo North Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

**Friesen**—Mary (nee Penner), 93 (b. Aug. 14, 1928; d. April 28, 2022), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Funk**—Willie, 83 (b. March 1, 1939; d. April 6, 2022), Altona Bergthaler Mennonite, Man., funeral held at Altona Evangelical Mennonite Mission Church.

**Kaenhofen**—Ben, 92 (b. April 18, 1930; d. May 2, 2022), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Klassen**—Hans, 84 (b. June 16, 1937; d. March 16, 2022), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Loewen**—Anne (nee Letkeman), 83 (b. June 14, 1938; d. April 28, 2022), Altona Mennonite, Man.

**Redekop**—Abner, 99 (b. Oct. 13, 1922; d. April 1, 2022), Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

**Retzlaff**—John, 94 (b. March 22, 1928; d. April 12, 2022), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

## FROM OUR LEADERS

# When the 'grey' is not holy

Michael Pahl

**L**ife is complicated. And this means “issues” are complicated.

The Bible doesn't give us as “black and white” a picture of life and faith as some of us might wish. In fact, that's one of the beautiful things about the Bible: It presents human experience in all its messiness. The older I get, the more I realize this truth: Life is complicated.

This means “issues” are complicated. Whether we're talking human sexuality or climate change, our response to COVID-19 or reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, these things are complicated. These are not merely “issues” debated in the abstract; they impact real people in very direct, personal ways.

It is tempting to claim, then, that the “holy grey” is what we should seek. A middle ground where all voices are equally valid, where compromise can be found, where polarization no longer reigns.

This sounds good. Often, it is good. This middle ground can be just what is needed to bring about wholeness, both individually and communally.

But sometimes the middle “grey” is

not holy. Sometimes it is, in fact, harmful.

In her book *How to Have an Enemy*, Melissa Florer-Bixler writes: “Jesus draws a line and places himself on one side of it. He asks us to stand there with him.” We can determine where that line is by attending to questions of power and vulnerability.

Who is impoverished in power—economic, political, cultural, social power—lacking the ability to change their circumstances for their flourishing? Who is vulnerable to harm—physical, psychological, sexual, spiritual harm—by those with power?

When these questions are not asked within our congregations and communities, we risk searching for a grey that is no longer holy. We risk settling for a middle ground where the relatively powerful find a compromise that keeps the status quo, while continuing to make the truly powerless invisible and inflicting harm on the most vulnerable.

In our thirst for peace, we risk losing justice. In our hunger for unity, we risk losing our way.

LGBTQ+ youth experience homelessness and attempt suicide at alarming

rates, especially when they do not have a supportive family and faith community around them.

The elderly, lower-income communities, the immuno-compromised, the unvaccinated—these are much more likely to have severe outcomes if they contract COVID-19.

Indigenous people face proportionally far higher poverty rates, incarceration rates, murder rates and rates of police violence.

And it is the poorest among us who are suffering the worst impacts of a warming climate.

These are the very ones Jesus focused his gaze on, considered “the least” and “the last” of our world. Jesus called his disciples to follow him in walking in solidarity with these most vulnerable to harm, empowering these most impoverished in power—even if that path means a cross.

May we search for holiness, yes, but a holiness grounded in Jesus' distinctive way of love. We might find this holiness in the grey spaces of our world. But sometimes we'll only find it on the precarious edge of a polarized divide. ❧



*Michael Pahl is executive minister of Mennonite Church Manitoba and attends Home Street Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.*

## A moment from yesterday



In 1966, *Christianity Today* magazine sponsored the World Congress on Evangelism, held in West Berlin from Oct. 26 to Nov. 4. It brought together 12,000 invited delegates from a hundred countries. The events were chaired by Carl F.H. Henry and Billy Graham. John M. Drescher reported on the event in a series of articles in *The Canadian Mennonite*. The theme was “One race, one gospel, one task.” In 1965, Frank Epp critiqued the location of the congress, saying the Christian church needs to “free itself from the limitation of western politics [but] by locating the congress in West Berlin this task becomes more difficult, if not impossible.” The congress was one of many events that influenced Mennonites to evaluate their role in the world.

Text: Conrad Stoesz

Photo: Conference of Mennonites in Canada Photo Collection



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## THE CHURCH HERE AND THERE

# What holds us together?

Arli Klassen

**M**y father cleaned out his bookshelves recently, and I acquired some more books about Mennonite history. One is a book I read with great interest when it came out in 1988, *Why I Am A Mennonite*. Almost every chapter is written by a Mennonite with a very traditional Russian or Swiss Mennonite last name.

As we grow more diverse, the question today is, “What holds us together as Mennonites/Anabaptists?”

I hear this question often at Mennonite Church Canada, MC Eastern Canada, and at Mennonite World Conference (MWC). Why are we together, and what does it mean to be Mennonite/Anabaptist together?

Historical tradition influences many of us who were born into a Mennonite church family in Congo, Brazil, Indonesia or Canada. In a faith community that emphasizes adult choice, one’s community of origin does not result in automatic adult faith, but it is a very large influence. If one chooses an adult faith, it is most often within the community of faith where one is raised, even when one moves from country to country.

On the other hand, we share historical traditions that continue to shape all of us around the world. I love the story from

2012, when MWC was hosting meetings in Switzerland. A Congolese Mennonite leader stood by the spot where Felix Manz was drowned in 1527 for being a Radical Reformer. The leader passionately declared that if he wasn’t already baptized, he would choose to do it right there, in that very same spot. The stories of radical discipleship from the early Anabaptist martyrs continue to influence all of us around the world today. We are a faith community that takes discipleship seriously, and we share a history of what it means to be a Jesus-follower.

As Mennonite/Anabaptists we have been trying to write down what we believe for a long time. The first known confession of faith was written in Switzerland in 1527, the Schleitheim Confession. Confessions of faith grew longer over the years, with variations among the many different groupings of Mennonites. MC Canada shares a confession with MC U.S.A., approved in 1995, with a role of providing guidelines on belief and practice, creating a foundation for unity.

On the other hand, MWC does not have a confession of faith, although it has existed for nearly 100 years. In 2006, MWC created a short one-page “Statement of Shared Convictions.” It is

clearly not a statement of shared beliefs that has held MWC together for the last 100 years!

So, what is it that holds us together, beyond our shared history and our statements of shared beliefs and practices?

Doug Klassen, MC Canada executive minister, says: “Our desire for a shared life in Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God propels us to have the faith needed to become part, and stay part, of the body.”

César García, MWC general secretary, says that “we are called to be a communion, to live in unity, which is a gift of the Holy Spirit.” Communion is based on committed relationships of sacrificial love, with common purposes of fellowship, service, worship and mission.

Ronald Alexandre, pastor of Église de Dieu Réparateur des Brèches in Montreal, says that it is the simplicity of the Anabaptist/Mennonite vision in its call to discipleship in Jesus that encouraged the congregation to join MC Eastern Canada a few weeks ago.

Leah Reesor-Keller, MC Eastern Canada’s executive minister, recently said, “We’re here together because we believe we are called to walk together, and we’ve chosen to be companions for this journey.” ☿



*Arli Klassen is a member of First Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont.; MC Eastern Canada; MC Canada; and MWC.*

## Et cetera

### Buggy uses solar power

Larry Yoder, an entrepreneur from Amish country in Illinois, built this solar-powered horseless carriage designed to look like an Amish vehicle, except that it does not use a horse. It is also larger than a traditional Amish buggy, providing ample space for six people and for solar panels on the roof. This was not an Amish project. Yoder mostly uses the vehicle to give rides to tourists. This photo was taken in Florida, where Yoder spent the winter, also near an Amish community.

Source: *Die Mennonitische Post*



PHOTO BY EDUARD KLASSEN PHOTOGRAPHY

## VOICES AND STORIES

# Going to the mountain

Anneli Loepp Thiessen

**W**ith the new Mennonite hymnal *Voices Together (VT)* recently released, many are eager to learn about the context of pieces within the collection. This column will tell the stories behind resources in *VT*. It will highlight songs and resources that reflect Anabaptist theology, come to us from Mennonites in many parts of the world, and are written by women and people of colour in particular.

As communities across Canada and the United States adopt *VT*, they will encounter both new songs and old songs from previous collections. But sometimes they will also encounter songs that they already know but that weren't in previous collections.

One example is Phil Campbell-Enns's "Mountain of God" (*VT* No. 11), which is widely known and loved by Canadian Mennonites yet which hadn't been previously published in one of our denominational collections.

Campbell-Enns wrote this anthem in the spring of 2000, after being inspired by rich learning and conversation in a course on youth ministry offered through Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg. He composed it for use at the Mennonite youth conference held

that summer, based on his reflections on passages in Isaiah and Micah.

On his songwriting process, he professes that "faith and music both show up out of thin air, then combine to become an expression of worship, is itself a sign of the Holy." The song was eagerly picked up at the conference, and attendees brought the song back to their church communities. It is still beloved more than 20 years later.

Conference attendees often learn several new songs over the course of a Mennonite Church Canada gathering or youth gathering, but not all of them stick. In this case, Campbell-Enns reflects: "I think the reason the song caught on after the conference was over was because it was the easiest thing for youth to take back and share with their congregations after we had spent that amazing week worshipping and learning and playing together."

"Mountain of God" is written with a simple verse-chorus structure and features a soaring refrain that is easy to catch on to. The song sounds most at home being led by guitar, but a piano accompaniment is also included in *VT*. Although it is written in unison, some communities may find that improvised harmonies come naturally, particularly

on the refrain. The lyrics of the anthem invite us to come as we are, particularly in the refrain: "So come, come as you are / oh, come, from near and far / oh, come, salvation we'll taste / as we climb the mountain of God."

The facing page for "Mountain of God" is a work of visual art entitled "Tree of Life," by Saejin Lee. The descriptive images in the art depict children, adults, animals, insects and dinosaurs gathered in celebration under the tree of life. Like Campbell-Enns's song, it is a vision of God's creation coming together.

Today, Campbell-Enns serves as a co-pastor of Home Street Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. On his hopes for the song as it continues to be learned and sung, he says: "I wrote the song for a one-week conference and never imagined the broader church would pick it up. But now that the song has been so warmly received, I hope it continues to give the church a way to express an inclusive and invitational faith—come as you are, as we share this journey of faith." ❧



*Anneli Loepp Thiessen is a PhD candidate in interdisciplinary music research at the University of Ottawa. She is the co-director of the Anabaptist Worship Network and was a committee member for Voices Together.*

## Et cetera

### Tractor raises \$76,000 at MCC relief sale

This tractor, donated by the family of Elmer Friesen, raised US\$76,000 at the Kansas Mennonite Relief sale in Hutchinson, in early April. Friesen farmed with the 7220 Case IH Magnum tractor until his death in 2020. It is believed to be the highest bid for a single item at a fundraising sale for Mennonite Central Committee. The previous presumed top item was a \$44,000 quilt sold at the New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale in Ontario in 2003. Of course, the symbolic auction of a loaf of bread at MCC B.C.'s festival has raised more, as all bids are added together.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANABAPTIST WORLD

## LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

# 'Godfidence' and confidence

Troy Watson

**"G**odfidence" is trusting God is in control and that *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."*

Godfidence is trusting that all things, even difficult and painful things, can work together for good, if we tune into the Spirit who is at work in us. Godfidence is an essential attitude and approach to life for a person of faith. However, it doesn't completely replace self-confidence.

A number of years ago, one of my mentors told me: "A good leader has to be able to rely on themselves, their wisdom, skills, abilities, experience and training. As a child of God, we must trust God. As a disciple, we must trust the teachings of Jesus, the leading of the Spirit, and the spiritual mentors and coaches God brings into our lives. However, if you want to mature, you need to learn to trust yourself as well."

I believe Jesus teaches the same. For example, Jesus instructs his followers to be savvy as serpents and pure as doves. Why? Because we need to be able to trust in ourselves and our ability to make wise and good decisions; and to make choices that honour our own growth and well-being, and the good of other people and parts of creation impacted by our choices.

Learning to trust yourself, believe in yourself, be confident in yourself, is an important spiritual practice, one that Christians often overlook or replace with Godfidence. But we need both the savvy serpent and the pure dove in our lives. We need Godfidence and self-confidence.

One of the primary strategies for developing self-confidence is to keep the promises you make to yourself. If you say you're going to do something, do it. If you say you're going to clean your room, get in shape, finish a project, start going to a therapist or quit an unhealthy habit, make sure you do it.

When you routinely fail to follow through on your commitments, you stop believing in yourself. You lose confidence in yourself when you say, "I'll start tomorrow," or, "I'll get on that next week," but you don't. You realize you are unreliable, and this leads to all manner of suffering.

**Self-confidence is about integrity: 'I am who I say I am, I do what I say I will do.' However, it is not arrogant, condescending or proud. It is not comparative. Self-confidence focuses on yourself, not others.**

Self-confidence is about integrity: "I am who I say I am, I do what I say I will do." However, it is not arrogant, condescending or proud. It is not comparative. Self-confidence focuses on yourself, not others. It's not thinking you are better or more productive, successful or committed than others are. It is simply being able to rely on your self to follow through and make wise decisions.

Self-confidence doesn't mean you won't fail. In fact, you'll probably experience more failure. The more self-confident you are, the more you are willing to take risks and fail, because your self-image and self-worth aren't impacted by failure or rejection. You know failure isn't permanent; it's just part of the process that leads to progress.

Life is research and failure is data. It's discovering another way that doesn't accomplish the results you are seeking. When you are self-confident, you know you'll get through failure, you'll learn and grow through it. In fact, one of the best ways to learn and grow is through failure. It doesn't frighten you, because you know you can rely on yourself to get back up and try again, or change your

goals in light of what you learn through failure.

Another strategy that helps us develop self-confidence is to surround ourselves with people who believe in us. Most of us struggle with a certain amount of self-doubt, no matter how much encouragement and positive

reinforcement we received growing up.

A good way to build self-confidence is to find a faith community that encourages and empowers one another. Not all churches are like this, but many are.

My first experience at a Mennonite church, 25 years ago, radically changed my life. One reason for this was that the church community believed in me and repeatedly told me they believed in me.

This was a season of life when I doubted myself. Over time, their belief in me helped me value myself, love myself and trust myself. They convinced me that I was worth believing in.

My hope is that the church continues to be a place that encourages and believes in people, a community that teaches everyone to be Godfident and confident. ☿



Troy Watson (*troy@avonchurch.ca*) is grateful for the people and churches that believed in him.

## VIEWPOINT

# Forum equips pastors to care for LGBTQ+ people

Joya van der Meulen

Queerness and theology do not always play well together. Ever since the word “homosexual” entered the English-language Bible (1946, RSV,) many of our own local, western Christian groups have been working hard to exclude LGBTQ+ folks from the family of God.

This intentional exclusion and constant discrimination has resulted in high rates of suicide and suicidal ideation, depression, anxiety, substance use, chronic stress and general mistrust of religious institutions. No Christian space is exempt from this legacy, and we must all learn to do better.

It is with this legacy in mind, that Grebel’s master of theological studies program, in collaboration with Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, offered a ministry forum on pastoral care for LGBTQ+ people recently.

Hosted by Carol Penner, Grebel’s director of theological studies, speakers Pieter Niemeyer and Steph Chandler-Burns challenged students and pastors to hold a posture of curiosity around how our own experiences and contexts may affect our ability to provide pastoral care. They asked questions like:

- **What emotions do I and the person that I am caring for bring into the space?**
- **What do I need to learn in order to respond well on the day that a parishioner comes out to me?**
- **Is the space or church that I am in safe for LGBTQ+ folks, or do the limits of my skill set and the church’s theology mean that referral to other professionals and spaces are more appropriate?**
- **Who do I assume is an agent of God?**



PIXABAY PHOTO BY NEELAM279

## • Who can receive God’s mercy?

Attendees of the forum came to understand that, regardless of our own theologies surrounding sexuality, we can expect that there will be LGBTQ+ people who grow up in our churches and that pastors should seek to do no harm. We were urged to create places of safety and freedom where people can explore their deepest truths, even if this disagrees with our own thinking. This is not to say that every church must become affirming, but being up-front and clear about the institution’s theological stance is, in itself, an expression of “do no harm.”

As current and emerging pastors, we were encouraged to educate ourselves so that we are prepared to engage well with people who are different from us. Knowing the basics of what each letter

in the LGBTQ+ acronym means, reading queer autobiographies and queer theologians, and learning to use language in an expansive and inclusive way, are expressions of love. Questioning our assumptions and listening carefully to voices that are different from our own are acts of love.

This is not just a case of being kind to outcasts. LGBTQ+ people have many specific gifts to offer to the church and we, the church, will only become more vibrant, more reflective of the image of God, when we learn to nurture and appreciate voices from the margins. ☘



*Joya van der Meulen, a master of theological studies student at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., attended the forum.*

## COVER STORY

# Don't be afraid of your weaknesses

*AMBS graduates pointed to Moses' story for leadership lessons*

By Annette Brill Bergstresser  
Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary  
ELKHART, IND.

**F**or wisdom and insight to face today's leadership challenges, César García invited participants at the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) commencement service on April 30 to look to the story of Moses and his call to serve in Exodus 4:1-17.

Around 140 people attended the service in person in the seminary's Chapel of the Sermon on the Mount. Nearly 80 people watched the event via livestream, with around a third of them viewing from outside of the United States.



PHOTO BY JASON BRYANT

*César García, general secretary of Mennonite World Conference, gives the address at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary's 2022 commencement service on April 30.*

In his commencement address, García, the general secretary of Mennonite World Conference (MWC), noted that, of the five times that Moses questions God's call to serve, only one of them upsets God:

Moses' refusal to act.

"A leader takes responsibility and acts," García said. "If you see a need, probably God is calling you to be part of the solution," said García, of Bogotá, Colombia, who now leads MWC from its office in Kitchener, Ont.

In the biblical narratives, he continued, God invites people to act. "God does not do it for us; God acts through us!" he said. "True leaders do not just manage. They create the conditions through which God's purposes can be fulfilled."

García pointed out that, in Exodus, how a leader commits is crucial, and he invited his listeners to reflect on three leadership lessons from Moses' story:

- **Commit by looking back at the past.**

García noted that God is revealed as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob four times in Exodus 3 and 4, and that God invites Moses to define his ministry and vision by looking back at the past.

"When we ignore our past, we ignore what God has been doing before," he cautioned. "So let's build on what God has been doing through our forebears, through the people in our positions of leadership before us."

- **Commit by seeing the best in others.**

In the second sign that God gave Moses to use in case the people didn't believe in his mission—Moses' hand being affected by leprosy—García saw a connection to God warning Moses to choose his words carefully in speaking about the people of Israel. In biblical times, leprosy was considered to be related to punishment for derogatory speech.

"Remember that evil speech is one of the worst sins in the Scriptures," he said. "Develop the ability to see the best—the great—in other people, your colleagues and those you are leading."

- **Commit with vulnerability.**

García noted that, when Moses tells God that he is not eloquent enough to carry out what God is asking of him, God does not deny his incapacity or punish him for his thoughts about himself: "On the contrary, it seems that God agrees with him! I am more and more convinced that God chooses people to lead not because of their capacity and talents, but because of their weaknesses."

García encouraged his listeners not to be afraid to recognize their weaknesses. He pointed out that, in Greek mythology, heroes faced battles against their enemies but, in biblical narratives, "the major conflicts we have to face are against ourselves: our fears, hesitations and sense of unworthiness."

"That may be because, in the Scriptures, it is not people's victories that make them leaders; it is how they cope with their defeats," he said. "You know you are called to lead because of your weaknesses because, thanks to them, your need for dependence on God is clear and evident."

## The 2022 graduating class

Of the 21 graduates honoured during the commencement service, there were 14 women and seven men from seven countries: Canada, Ethiopia, Honduras, Indonesia, Nigeria, Tanzania and the United States. Eleven of the graduates are members of Mennonite Church U.S.A.; one is from MC Canada; and three are from Mennonite denominations around the world. One graduate is from the United Methodist Church, and five represent other denominations or nondenominational churches.

Mennonite colleges and universities with graduates in AMBS's Class of 2022 include Columbia Bible College in Abbotsford, B.C., and Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont. ☞

# Indigenous relations work revamped, reduced

*Steve Heinrichs no longer with MC Canada*

By Will Braun  
Senior Writer

**T**he governing body of Mennonite Church Canada has decided to end the full-time Indigenous-Settler Relations (ISR) position held by Steve Heinrichs and replace it with a new halftime position.

Heinrichs's 10-plus notable years with MC Canada are over.

At the same time, MC Canada will add a halftime climate action position and a halftime associate executive minister position. The decisions were made at the the Joint Council meeting on April 9 and 10.

The MC Canada release states that Heinrichs will not be filling the new halftime ISR position. MC Canada executive minister Doug Klassen says policies prevent him for disclosing whether Heinrichs was offered the halftime position. Heinrichs is similarly limited in what he can say.

That said, his preference would have been to continue in the role he had. The cutback was effective immediately, although Heinrichs has offered to remain for a short time, to assist with transition and to wrap up projects, including a book about Edith and Neill von Gunten, who worked for MC Canada in Indigenous communities in Manitoba for nearly 40 years, before being let go in 2003 due to a major budget shortfall.

Klassen hopes to have the new halftime position filled in the fall.

## Rationale

According to Klassen and MC Canada moderator Calvin Quan, the decision was based on budget constraints and the shifting priorities of the regional churches that control MC Canada. The shift is towards more climate work and toward regionalization of ISR work. Quan says that Joint Council was concerned for Heinrichs's well-being in the change.

Klassen says the timing of the decision,

which appeared abrupt to some, was dictated by the need for Joint Council to have a budget to present at the national gathering on July 29 to Aug. 1.

## Finances

Money-wise, the changes will be roughly cost-neutral. The three new halftime positions (ISR, climate and associate executive minister) will cost about as much as Heinrichs's full-time position plus the approximately \$35,000 in program money that was previously allotted to ISR.

The regions may or may not make up that lost program money. "If the regions want to put program money into it, they can," Klassen says. None of the regions have announced new program spending for their Indigenous relations programs.

## A decade of impact

The work Heinrichs facilitated included pivotal ecumenical support for passage of a federal law that enshrines the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in Canadian law, publication of six books that included input from dozens of notable contributors and were widely used, and countless book studies and other events across the country.

Jennifer Preston worked closely with Heinrichs on the UNDRIP campaign. She is the general secretary and Indigenous Rights Program coordinator of Canadian Friends Service Committee. Preston says Heinrichs was passionate, generous, a great mobilizer, and an effective campaigner.

Preston says she was "astounded" by the recent MC Canada decision. She's not alone.

Many people—Mennonites, Indigenous and others—were surprised and perplexed by the decision.

"Not sure how I feel about this," wrote

Cheryl Bear on Twitter. "Feels like someone threw the monopoly board mid-game."

Bear is an Indigenous musician, author and theologian who contributed to one of the books Heinrichs edited.

## Grassroots reaction

The ISR work will now be "transitioned" to the five regional churches. But it is not yet clear if the transition will involve significant new staff or budget commitments to the regional work.

MC Manitoba has increased its staff capacity somewhat in recent months, and MC Eastern Canada may attach money and staff to its newly adopted emphasis on Indigenous relations, but in large part this work in our denomination is carried out by various congregations and by volunteer working groups in four of the five regions.

To a considerable extent, regionalization will see these groups shoulder the load. In most cases, Heinrichs was involved in starting and supporting these groups; and providing opportunities, resources, and connections for their work. The new halftime ISR worker will focus on supporting these groups.

Klassen and Quan say regional leaders indicated a desire to regionalize the ISR work, although neither Klassen nor Quan have heard people in the pews express this desire to them.

Five of the six working group members I interviewed were surprised and disappointed.

"Having [Heinrichs] out of that position felt like a real blow," says Peter Haresnape, an MC Eastern Canada pastor and chair of the regional church's working group on Indigenous relations. "I'm really surprised by this and concerned about what it means for [our] working group."

A statement by the working group in Manitoba reads in part: "We are deeply saddened to be losing the wisdom, experience, support and broader connections that Steve was able to offer to us as a group and to many others. . . . We are also disappointed that neither [our group] nor the other regional ISR working groups were consulted in the decision-making process."

The decision may have the least impact in B.C., which has dedicated staff time for Indigenous relations (0.4 FTE) and where



CM FILE PHOTO BY HENRY KRAUSE

*In this 2018 photo, Lorne Brandt, right, then chair of MC B.C.'s Service, Peace and Justice Committee, presents Steve Heinrichs with a vest and moccasins made by Cree craftspeople.*

the working group, while deeply grateful to Heinrichs, appears to operate with greater autonomy, although Heinrichs was involved in helping members plan a trip to Wet'suwet'en territory in northern B.C.

### Indigenous reaction

"We lost another good one," Adrian Jacobs says of Heinrichs. Jacobs is a member of the Cayuga First Nation (Six Nations) and outgoing keeper of the circle at Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre in Manitoba. As a pastor, teacher, writer and advocate, he has worked with Mennonites in various provinces for many years. He says the feeling of losing good church staff in this work is familiar to him, mentioning other Mennonites who lost work roles.

Jacobs wrote for publications that Heinrichs edited, and the two worked together on reconciliation efforts with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, of which MC Canada is a member. Jacobs calls Heinrichs "a friend forever."

Jacobs appreciates Mennonite history, flat leadership models, and a "dirt-under-the-nails" approach to faith, but he is not interested in the intricacies of our organizational explanations for why people like Heinrichs find themselves out of work. "Don't tell me about all that," he says.

Harry Lafond, the former director of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner in Saskatchewan and former chief of Muskeg Lake Cree Nation, echoes the appreciation for the way Heinrichs did "not just sit in his office in Winnipeg," but organized walks

and got directly involved in pipeline issues in northern B.C.

"It's a real loss," Lafond says of Heinrichs's departure. Noting that, as an "outside observer," he does not know how it will all play out, he says: "It makes me wonder: What shape is your social justice advocacy going to take? . . . What's behind the change? . . . What happens to the national Mennonite voice?"

Sylvia McAdam—author, law professor and co-founder of Idle No More—says the decision to halve the position that Heinrichs filled has "shaken" her trust in the Mennonite church. For McAdam, the decision signals a lack of commitment. She says the Mennonite "light is diminishing."

### Controversy

Of course, not everyone felt the same about Heinrichs's work. Predictably, it was controversial. In 2019, when on holiday, he was arrested at a pipeline protest in Burnaby, B.C. Last fall, he spearheaded the "7 Calls to Climate Action" initiative, a non-work involvement that targeted church leaders, offending some. His activity on social media—where lines between personal and work identities blur—likewise caused leaders consternation, ultimately leading to restrictions being placed on his online activity related to climate change.

Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, executive minister of MC Alberta, speaks to the varying views. He says there is "lament" among some in congregations and some Indigenous partners around the decision, and there is concern that the commitment to ISR work is being reduced or "downloaded" to the regions.

At the same time, Wiebe-Neufeld says: "For some in [the regional church], Steve's approach to advocacy didn't give them an entry point to engage in ISR. Some also found that their existing relationships with Indigenous people were at odds with Steve's approach. It is a challenge to find ways to engage in issues of justice like these in ways that meet people where they are at, and do not further polarize."

### Restructuring

The decentralizing trajectory is part of a decade-long process of restructuring. The Future Directions Task Force process, which

traces back to 2011, essentially cut the national office, shifting control to regions, with a stated focus on congregations. Hopes are that the restructuring process will finally wrap up this year, after a decade of very substantial organizational investment in the internal work. An operating agreement and shared revenue agreement should be presented for approval at the annual national gathering this summer, with procedural changes to follow.

### Consultation

Klassen and Quan confirm that Indigenous people were not consulted in the decision about Heinrichs's position, and the Joint Council does not have an Indigenous advisory group. Quan says it would have been unfair to Heinrichs to have open conversations about the possibility of reducing his position, although key parts of the earlier MC Canada restructuring process involved open conversations in the context of imminent layoffs.

In terms of consultation on next steps, Klassen says that, once a job description for the new position is drafted, regional leaders can consult Indigenous people as they see fit.

### Final words

For his part, Heinrichs has only positive things to say, aside from his obvious grief: "I am so lucky that I got to do this work for 10-plus years. . . . I and my family have been so enriched by the relationships we have formed."

He "celebrates" the creation of the climate position.

Noting that the work is much bigger than one person, and that he does not rest his hopes in staff allotments, his primary concern is for the deepening and growth of that work and the community that carries it out.

While this is a low, or at least perplexing, moment for many who care about Indigenous relations work, Heinrichs takes a broad view: "[There's] nothing to say the church can't respond differently in two years." ❧

*A longer version of this article appears online at [canadianmennonite.org/braun-isr-2022](http://canadianmennonite.org/braun-isr-2022).*



# Individual donations trend up within regional churches

*New revenue-sharing agreement reached in MC Canada*

By Tobi Thiessen  
Publisher

Individuals increased direct giving to their regional church in year two of the COVID-19 pandemic. The growth is contrary to the experience of secular charities. According to the CanadaHelps fifth annual Giving Report, charitable giving fell an estimated 12 percent between 2019 and 2021. In contrast, individual donations to Mennonite Church Canada's regional churches grew by an average of 11 percent last year.

At the annual meetings of each regional church, held on Zoom or in-person in March and April, financial statements showed growth in individual donations of 4 percent for MC Alberta, 5 percent for MC Saskatchewan, 11 percent for MC British Columbia and 16 percent for MC Manitoba and MC Eastern Canada.

The donation growth offset at least somewhat the downward trend in congregational giving that continued in 2021. Congregational giving has been dwindling for years, as regular church attendance has also declined. With fewer people attending worship, there are fewer people giving

money, meaning there is less to go around. The trend is worse in rural areas, where the overall population is in decline.

Responding to the trend, Gordon Peters, treasurer of MC Saskatchewan, said in an email: "Small, rural churches are experiencing struggles in many ways. Support from urban churches has been steady."

While MC Eastern Canada reported 1 percent growth in undesignated gifts from its 98 congregations, the other regional churches all saw congregational giving decline, from 2 percent in Manitoba and Alberta to 8 percent in Saskatchewan and 9 percent in B.C.

The growth in individual giving was a welcome surprise, given that regional churches do limited direct fundraising. Their primary source of revenue is from congregational giving. Individuals donate to the church they attend. Congregations then send a portion of their offerings to the regional church. In turn, the regional churches pass on a portion of their receipts to MC Canada. In 2021, congregational giving accounted for 88 percent

of regional-church donation revenue.

Three regional churches also accessed federal COVID-19 relief grants for the second year in a row, which further improved their revenue streams. As a result, regional churches reported better-than-expected year-end results, posting surpluses or smaller deficits than budgeted.

"We had planned for a deficit of \$75,200 in 2021," wrote MC Alberta treasurer Wayne Janz in his year-end report. "Due to the generous support and keeping costs under budget, we ended the year with a \$34,800 surplus."

While MC B.C. and MC Eastern Canada both recorded deficits, the deficits were part of the budget, designed to draw down reserves created by previous large gifts, such as the sale of property or a bequest. With higher-than-expected revenue in 2021, MC Eastern Canada's deficit was \$130,000, compared to the \$154,000 deficit budgeted. MC B.C. also did better than expected, recording a deficit of \$70,000; after accounting for transfers

## 2021 Regional church finances

	MC British Columbia 27 member congregations			MC Alberta 12 member congregations			MC Saskatchewan 22 member congregations		
	FYE Dec. 2021	FYE Dec. 2020		FYE Dec. 2021	FYE Dec. 2020		FYE Dec. 2021	FYE Dec. 2020	
Congregational giving	\$197,064	\$215,757	↓ 9%	\$318,993	\$324,135	↓ 2%	\$375,114	\$405,865	↓ 8%
Individual giving	\$181,688	\$163,313	↑ 11%	\$71,551	\$68,854	↑ 4%	\$57,646	\$54,915	↑ 5%
Wage subsidies/grants	\$83,638	\$89,679		\$58,718	\$61,221			\$31,609	
Operating expenses	\$606,866	\$606,528	0%	\$385,506	\$405,413	↓ 5%	\$254,963	\$217,863	↑ 17%
Passed to MC Canada (undesignated)	\$76,060	\$51,019		\$75,000	\$75,000		\$92,167	\$115,910	
Year end surplus (deficit)	(\$71,816)	(\$53,767)		\$34,834	\$94,994		(\$24,745)	\$30,836	



from restricted funds, MC B.C., in fact, posted a surplus of \$53,000.

### New shared revenue agreement with MC Canada

From 2018 to 2020, regional churches pledged to send a fixed-dollar amount to support shared ministries carried out by MC Canada. In 2021, the regions negotiated a new shared revenue agreement, in which each regional church will forward a percentage of congregational giving rather than a fixed amount. The agreement has not yet been made public, but the

contribution levels are set to be around 20 percent for the smaller regional churches of B.C., Alberta and Saskatchewan, and 30 percent for MC Manitoba and MC Eastern Canada.

By switching over to a percentage method of sharing revenue, MC Canada's finances will rise and fall in parallel with what the regional churches experience.

At the time of writing, MC Canada's financial statements were not available. They will be approved at the nationwide church's annual meeting in Edmonton on Aug. 1. ❧

### News brief

#### MC Canada donates \$50,000 to MWC's Assembly 2022 fund

Mennonite Church Canada is donating \$50,000 to help Mennonite World Conference (MWC) meet its expenses for Assembly 2022 in Indonesia this summer, and is calling on its member congregations to help match the donation. "In keeping with Assembly 2022's theme of 'following Jesus together across barriers,' our donation is a way to support our brothers and sisters in faith around the globe," says Calvin Quan, moderator of MC Canada. Assembly 2022 will be held at Sangkakala Seminary in Kopeng, from July 5 to 10. Due to remaining COVID-19 measures, MWC is limiting on-site attendance to 1,250 people (up from an original limit of 500), compared to the more than 8,000 participants who gathered in Pennsylvania for Assembly 2015. Thousands are expected to attend Assembly 2022 online. Due to the limited number of guests, the income generated by on-site registration is much lower than in the past, while costs for running an online and in-person event remain the same. As a result, MWC issued a request to its member denominations for contributions to help MWC meet its event expenses. "We have raised over \$300,000 in contributions to support the assembly, but we still need to raise about \$500,000 to pay for all of the anticipated expenses," wrote J. Ron Byler, MWC's chief development officer, in the March request. To donate to the MWC Assembly Fund, visit [mwc-cmm.org](http://mwc-cmm.org).

—MC CANADA / MWC



### Regional church budgets cover items such as:

- **Leadership:** licensing and oversight of pastors and spiritual leaders.
- **Congregations:** resources for lay leaders, workshops, church planting and support.
- **Regional-level ministry:** peace and justice work, creation care, Indigenous-Settler Relations. Priorities may vary by region.
- **Support** for Mennonite camps, schools, *Canadian Mennonite*.
- **Support** for the nationwide shared ministry of Mennonite Church Canada, such as International Witness and CommonWord.

**Sources:** 2021 MCBC Statement of Operations; 2021 MCA Audited Financial Statements; 2021 MC Sask financial report, MCM 2021 Statement of Revenue and Expenditures; MCEC 2021-22 Statement of Operating Fund Revenue and Expenditures.

**Notes:**

1. Full financial statements include other revenue and expense lines not shown here.
2. MCBC and MCEC intentionally budget for operating deficits because they draw funding each year from reserve funds created previously by large, non-standard gifts. They determine the maximum annual draw from the reserve that the church may use and plan a budget with a deficit up to the maximum draw. If operating revenue is higher than budgeted, the full amount budgeted for the draw is not taken.

MC Manitoba 38 member congregations			MC Eastern Canada 98 member congregations		
FYE Dec. 2021	FYE Dec. 2020		FYE Jan. 2022	FYE Jan. 2021	
\$899,558	\$916,046	↓2%	\$1,664,247	\$1,645,630	↑1%
\$40,449	\$34,948	↑16%	\$120,615	\$104,287	↑16%
\$66,454	\$87,713		\$3,254	\$167,367	
\$399,322	\$395,679	↑1%	\$1,189,540	\$1,205,420	↓1%
\$264,756	\$321,009		\$500,410	\$570,000	
\$68,136	\$120,700		(\$130,865)	(\$68,015)	

# Taking steps in ‘courageous imagination’

*MC Eastern Canada plants seeds for a new future*

By Virginia A. Hostetler  
Executive Editor

“Yes, we all lost sound at the Great Commission.” That humorous comment by Cathrin van Sintern-Dick appeared in the Zoom chat of the first hybrid annual church gathering of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, held April 29 and 30.

Van Sintern-Dick, who serves as a regional ministry associate with MC Eastern Canada, was helping with communication between the attendees on the video conferencing app and the ones taking part in the in-person meeting at Redeemer University in Ancaster, Ont.

Flexibility, creativity and patience helped carry the event, the regional church’s first large in-person gathering since 2019. More than 300 people participated in times of reporting, worshipping, commissioning, decision making and personal connecting.

Connected with the Parable of the



MCEC PHOTO BY LUKE FILLION

**Moderator Arli Klassen greets participants of the MC Eastern Canada’s hybrid annual gathering. She and dozens of others attended via Zoom.**

Mustard Seed in Luke 13, the theme “Courageous Imagination: Living into the Journey” appeared throughout the sessions.



PHOTO BY VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER

**Friends connect at MC Eastern Canada’s annual gathering. From left to right: Brandon Hewitson, Brittany Anonthysene, Khan Thirakul and Katie Anonthysene.**

“I encourage all of us to look for seeds of God’s healing and hope among us,” urged moderator Arli Klassen, who took part from her home via Zoom.

Guest speaker Jeanette Hanson, who serves as director of International Witness for MC Canada, told stories of Mennonites living out “seeds of faith” in Thailand, South Korea, Colombia and Canada.

In her message to the gathering, MC Eastern Canada executive minister Leah Reesor-Keller said: “I believe the key to leading the church during this time is growing our capacity to dream and imagine other ways of being, imagining new ways of living into God’s shalom.”

She acknowledged that, over the past few years, change has been a constant, not a choice. She asked, “Rooted in Christ, our foundation, and strengthened by our history and relationships, how do we create and dream new ways of being church to each other and to our rapidly changing world?”

“Just like prayer and scripture reading, ‘courageous imagination’ is a holy practice that we need to cultivate as individuals, as congregations, as a regional church together,” she said. “How could things be different than they are? Who is God calling us to be and what does that require of us?”

The theme of “courageous imagination” saw expression in MC Eastern Canada’s new “Identity and Purpose Statement,” brought to the delegates for “discernment and approval.” This document resulted from a months-long process that included open meetings throughout the regional church, discussion of document drafts, inspirational podcasts and social media posts.

Participants broke into table groups for discussion, and their reports were summarized for the large group. A time of open mic offered opportunity for affirmations and questions from the floor and via chat and on screen.

Responding to some concerns expressed, Reesor-Keller encouraged love for each other and an embrace of the diversity in theological perspectives present throughout the regional church. “We have some wrestling to do,” she said, acknowledging that it might not be easy or comfortable. “But it’s something we must



MCEC PHOTO BY LUKE FILLION

**Goshen Mennonite Church, Ottawa, was welcomed as a provisional member of MC Eastern Canada.**

wrestle with as a community.”

Delegates approved the document with the recognition that the priorities outlined there would help guide the regional church for the next five years. The next step is for staff and the executive council to develop specific goals, strategies and structures that guide future action.

“These are big ideas, and they will shape who we are [as a regional church] and what

we will do,” said Klassen.

Another formality was the recognition of 25 new pastors who had been installed within the past two years. These leaders signed covenant documents and the assembly offered prayers for their ministry.

Sean East, MC Eastern Canada’s financial manager, reported on the regional church’s finances. Giving by individuals was up \$20,000 from the

previous year, as was giving by congregations. The budgeted deficit was less than expected and was covered with planned transfers from restricted funds.

Although delegates had just accepted the new priorities statement, the 2022-23 budget is based on last year’s figures, with an eye toward “a new reality” that will come as specific strategies are developed. East stated that MC Eastern Canada is in a strong financial position for the immediate future, with flexibility to react to changing circumstances. (*For a financial picture of all the regional churches, see “Individual donations trend up within regional churches,” on page 16.*)

“Embracing diversity” was named as one of the priorities for the regional church’s next five years, and that was evident in various ways throughout the meetings. Participants could access simultaneous translation into French, and the Lao Mennonite Fellowship of Canada, a group of four Ontario congregations, provided music for the worship times, with songs in English, Lao and Chin.

Seven new churches were formally recognized as part of the MC Eastern Canada body, representing various ethnic and racial backgrounds: Meheret Evangelical Church (Kitchener, Ont.) was designated as a full member, and six others became provisional members: Centre Béthésda Mennonite de Québec (Quebec City), Burning Bush Forest Church (Waterloo Region, Ont.), Église de Dieu Réparateur des Brèches (Montreal), Église Mennonite Agape (Drummondville, Que.), Goshen Mennonite Church (Ottawa), and The Meeting Place (Hamilton, Ont.). (*See pages 20 and 21 for more information on these congregations.*)

Janice Monture, a local Indigenous leader, led the gathering in a time of gratitude for creation and the Creator, and she offered advice on how congregations might develop and use land acknowledgements in their own settings. ❧

To view highlights of the event and Leah Reesor Keller’s message, visit [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/user/MennoEasternCanada/videos)

[/user/MennoEasternCanada/videos](https://www.youtube.com/user/MennoEasternCanada/videos).



MCEC PHOTO BY LUKE FILLION

**Pastor Yoel Trakoon Masyawong and a group from the Lao Mennonite Fellowship Canada led the gathering in music.**

# New congregations join MC Eastern Canada

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada

**M**eheret Evangelical Church joined MC Eastern Canada in 2017 as a provisional member congregation, and it moved to full membership in the regional church this year, becoming a recognized congregation in MC Canada as well. Established 25 years ago, Meheret worships in Amharic and English, and it continues to focus on discipleship and nurturing leaders within the congregation. The congregation is one of the largest communities with Ethiopian origins in Waterloo Region, Ont.

Meheret reaches out globally in Ethiopia, providing support for Bright World for Blind Women, centred in Addis Ababa. Founded by a church member at Meheret who has been blind since age seven, Bright World for Blind Women supports 80 to 100 women in Ethiopia by providing fellowship and training for different trades.

Meheret also partners with a church in Ethiopia and fully supports three missionaries to reach the unreached and traditionally resistant communities in the northern part of Ethiopia.

Through Manna for Kids Foundation, also founded by members of Meheret, the church supports and provides skill-based training to marginalized single women in the city of Debre Birhan, Ethiopia.

Locally, Meheret continues to expand its gospel outreach in Guelph, Stratford and Hamilton to Ethiopian and Eritrean people whose first languages are Amharic and Tigrinya.

Pastor Yared Seretse provides pastoral leadership to Meheret Evangelical Church.

• **Centre Béthésda Mennonite de Québec** began meeting online and in small prayer groups in late 2019, and it joined MC Eastern Canada as a provisional member congregation this year. Due to the pandemic, the church met online through 2020, beginning in-person worship gatherings as restrictions allowed in mid-2021. A congregation composed



*Centre Béthésda Mennonite de Québec worships in Quebec City.*

primarily of immigrants and refugees from Swahili-speaking countries in East Africa, Béthésda has a vision to be an incarnational gospel presence for everyone in Quebec City. The congregation worships in French with regular translation into the language(s) of those present. Since the summer of 2021, Béthésda has been renting space from a Salvation Army church. Charles Tabena is the lead pastor.

• **Burning Bush Forest Church** began meeting outdoors for worship in March 2016, and it joined MC Eastern Canada as a provisional member congregation this year. It is a small, experimental worshipping group of individuals who have found themselves longing for connection with the Divine Spirit in the natural world. The name, Burning Bush Forest Church, comes



*Burning Bush Forest Church worships outdoors in Waterloo Region, Ont.*



*Goshen Mennonite Church worships in Ottawa.*



*Église de Dieu Réparateur des Brèches worships in Montreal.*



*Église Mennonite Agape worships in Drummondville, Que.*



*The Meeting Place gathers at 541 Eatery and Exchange in Hamilton, Ont.*

from a verse in Exodus where God speaks to Moses in the form of a burning bush. The voice from the bush instructs Moses: “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” Worship themes the past year have included “Winter’s sacred blessings,” “Kinship with creation,” “Sunset and stargazing,” “Encircling prayer,” and “World communion.” Wendy Janzen provides leadership to Burning Bush Forest Church. She is an ordained pastor and the regional church’s eco-minister.

- **Église de Dieu Réparateur des Brèches** (RDB) is a congregation of Haitian immigrants planted in Montreal more than 25 years ago; it has been in relationship with MC Eastern Canada over the past decade, and it joined as a provisional member congregation this year. The group of 100 members own its worship space and has several rental apartments providing an ongoing source of income to the congregation. RDB worships in French, Creole and English, and it is drawn to the regional church by the simplicity of the Anabaptist/Mennonite vision in its call to discipleship rooted in Jesus. Ronald Alexandre provides leadership to this congregation.

- **Église Mennonite Agape** was formed after a group of five people began meeting for prayer in 2019, and it joined as a

provisional member congregation of MC Eastern Canada this year. The congregation has grown to a group of 30 adults and children, and it has a strong relationship with Famille Assemblée de la Grâce, which introduced Agape to MC Eastern Canada. The church desires to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and put gospel into action in its under-resourced neighbourhood. Pastor Jean-Ematiel Bossicot and co-pastor Guy La Monde, along with their congregational leaders, provide leadership to this congregation.

- **Goshen Mennonite Church** replanted in summer of 2020 and has grown to a group of 60 worshippers in Ottawa; the congregation joined as a provisional member congregation of MC Eastern Canada this year. The congregation is composed almost entirely of immigrants and refugees from East Africa, and worships in multiple languages, including French, English, Swahili, Kirundi and Kinyarwanda, with simultaneous translation being a consistent feature of worship. Goshen has an active ministry of welcoming newcomers from Africa and is a place for refugees and immigrants arriving in Canada. Pastor Francois Machichi provides leadership to this congregation. His son Moses leads a vibrant young-adult worship ministry.

- **The Meeting Place**, a small urban church plant in Hamilton, Ont., began worshipping together 15 years ago, and joined MC Eastern Canada as a provisional member member congregation this year. Sue Carr provides pastoral leadership to this group of young professionals, students and street-affected folks. The congregation is part of a network of churches in Hamilton on mission together—TruCity. It meets in a non-profit coffee shop—541 Eatery and Exchange—and experiences a strong relationship between the church plant and the coffee shop. Introduced to MC Eastern Canada through a relationship with The Commons, a former MC Eastern Canada congregation, the Meeting Place is already building connections with regional church congregations. It seeks to be an incarnational mission presence in an eastside neighbourhood of Hamilton. ✎

# Art and inspiration at B.C. Women's Day

Story and Photos by Amy Rinner Waddell  
B.C. Correspondent  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.



*Freda Lombard of Zealous Art shows the B.C. Women's Day participants the picture that they will be painting.*

**W**omen of Mennonite Church B.C. once again gathered in person for the spring Women's Day on May 7, following a two-year pandemic-related hiatus. The event, held at Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford with 32 participants, was limited to the morning hours only this year.

This year's speaker was Tammy Roy, the author of *Nudges from Heaven*, in which she explores "those little experiences," moments in life where God reaches down to individuals, sometimes in subtle ways. Citing examples from her own life, Roy urged participants to listen for the presence of God, saying: "You can each have those intimate moments with the Father. We've got to fix our eyes on Jesus. . . . We're going to smell like the fragrance of heaven."

A new activity this year was expressing creativity through acrylic painting. Freda

Lombard of Zealous Art, who said she does "fun art, not fine art," guided the group in painting individual pictures of a tree scene together. Many were trying painting for



*Christine Wiebe of Crossroads Community Church in Chilliwack, tries her hand at guided artwork during the B.C. Women's Day on May 7.*

the first time but left with their finished painting in hand and an "I didn't know I could do that" attitude.

As is tradition, a memorial slide show honoured women who had passed during the previous year. The \$430 offering taken was divided evenly between Camp Squeah and the MC B.C. Women's Education Fund.

Although attendance was smaller this year, comments from those present indicated they had a very good time.

"I appreciated the speaker and the art project; both were good for the soul and mind," said Rita Siebert of Langley. "I also appreciated being together with other women."

"For those who attended the Women's Day, it was a morning well spent, and therefore plans are to continue Women's Day in the future," said organizer Janette Thiessen. ☸

/// News brief

MC B.C. youths 'seen' at Camp Squeah

HOPE, B.C.—Youth groups from Mennonite Church B.C. congregations gathered at Camp Squeah in Hope, for the Youth Impact retreat weekend, held from April 22 to 24. This year's retreat included 148 junior and senior youths from Bethel, Eden, Emmanuel, Cedar Valley, Crossroads, Living Hope and Level Ground Mennonite churches. Speaker Jon Tetzl, youth pastor of Greendale MB Church, presented several sessions on the theme of "Seen." Tetzl went through the Gospel of Mark as he talked about being seen by Jesus and seeing the true Jesus. Free-time activities included soccer, indoor rock climbing, games and outdoor night games. This was the first time since 2018 that an MC B.C. youth retreat was held.



PHOTO BY BLESS LEN

*Participants enjoy the challenge of the climbing wall.*

—BY AMY RINNER  
WADDELL



PHOTO BY BLESS LEN

*Youth compete in a cup-stacking game.*

July 31 – August 4, 2022  
Camp Valaqua, Alberta

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## PEOPLE

# Music comes alive through synesthesia, art

*Project by CMU student and instructor assigns colours to music performed by the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra*

Canadian Mennonite University  
WINNIPEG



CMU PHOTO

*CMU student Anna Schwartz, left, stands with visual artist and piano instructor Shirley Elias in front of one of the artworks that make up 'Spectrum—The Colour of Music; Precision and Impression.'*

Imagine if you could see sound. When Anna Schwartz listens to music, she not only hears the different instruments, keys and dynamics—she sees them. That's because she has synesthesia, a neurological condition in which information entering a person's brain stimulates multiple senses at once.

Only four percent of people worldwide are synesthetes. For some, biting into a juicy apple might cause them to see a

specific image, while others might experience a physical feeling of touch when they hear a certain word. Schwartz sees a kaleidoscope of colours when she listens to music.

Originally from Ontario, Schwartz is a pianist, composer and fourth-year student at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg. She is working toward a bachelor of music degree with concentrations in piano performance and

music education.

This spring, she shared her experience with synesthesia in a new way through a project with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra (WSO). She collaborated with Shirley Elias—a visual artist, concert pianist and her piano instructor at CMU—to create a visual representation of *Scheherazade*, a symphonic suite composed by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov.

The result is a collection of paintings



Elias created based on what Schwartz sees when she listens to *Scheherazade*. The series, entitled “Spectrum—The Colour of Music; Precision and Impression,” was hung in Winnipeg’s Centennial Concert Hall and was projected on a screen while the orchestra performed Rimsky-Korsakov’s work at a concert on March 12.

### The ‘precision’ portion

The “precision” portion of the project spans four canvases, and consists wholly of vertical lines painted in the colours and textures Schwartz sees throughout *Scheherazade*, depicted exactly when and for how long she sees them. It features 537 stripes and 269 colours. Spread over 45 minutes of music, this means Schwartz’s colours change on average every three to five seconds.

For example, when a solo violin soars over the strumming of harps, she sees yellow, her colour for the key of E minor. The solo violin’s texture is wavy, while the harp underneath is cloudier, adding pops of colour here and there to the yellow.

Schwartz listened to the WSO’s entire season to figure out which piece would work best for the collaboration. She chose Rimsky-Korsakov’s composition because of its multitude of vibrant, distinct colours. “Every instrument had such a unique role in this piece of music, its own purpose and way of contributing to the overall picture,” she says. She discovered that Rimsky-Korsakov also had synesthesia, as did other composers like Franz Liszt and Olivier Messiaen.

The artistic process began with Schwartz reading through the whole musical score measure by measure, meticulously marking every colour and texture and when she saw it. Equipped with Benjamin Moore paint palettes—around 3,500 colours—she wrote down the six-digit codes of each colour, which Elias used to determine an exact colour match. The artist then mathematically calculated how wide each stripe on the canvas should be in relationship to the whole piece.

“Some of those were milliseconds, sometimes there was two colours at one time,” Elias says.

### The ‘impression’ portion

For the “impression” part of the project, Elias used Schwartz’s colour palette and descriptions to create her own artistic representations of *Scheherazade*’s four movements in four paintings. For the rhythmic second movement she painted in the style of cubism, while a gentler movement she likened more to watercolours. This gave her the chance to expand on details that had to be simplified and, on occasion, were too small to see in the “precision” piece.

### Connections across disciplines

Schwartz is also taking science courses alongside music, and she wants to pursue studies in medicine, or music and health, after she graduates. This symphonic exploration brought together her passions for music and science.

“I really do feel like this project brought together so many different disciplines for me, all of which I find fascinating,”

Schwartz says. “I’m just loving having a foot in the door of all these different worlds.” ❧

*Schwartz and Elias were featured in a short documentary, Spectrum: The Colour of Music, created by Les Productions Rivard.*

### ❧ Staff change

#### New historian will connect past and present



**David Y. Neufeld** has been appointed as Conrad Grebel University College’s new assistant professor of history, beginning July 1, succeeding Marlene Epp,

who retires this summer. As a scholar of early modern Europe, Neufeld studies the interaction of Swiss Anabaptists with their Reformed neighbours and officials in Zurich from 1550 to 1650. His work challenges scholarly and popular assumptions about the degree to which Swiss Anabaptists were separated from their neighbours and society. His training in early modern Anabaptism and his breadth of knowledge in Mennonite studies will build on Grebel’s reputation in these fields, and he will enlarge the network of pre-modern and early modern scholars at the University of Waterloo. Neufeld has been a visiting assistant professor of history at Grebel since 2019, following his doctoral studies at the University of Arizona. Previously, Neufeld attained a bachelor’s degree in history at the University of Waterloo, Ont., where he also minored in peace and conflict studies at Grebel. He is currently revising his book manuscript for publication, *Separating Tares from Wheat: Making an Anabaptist Minority in Early Modern Switzerland*. Beyond teaching and scholarship, Neufeld will join Grebel’s Institute of Anabaptist and Mennonite Studies, where he has been serving as associate director.

—CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

### ❧ News brief

#### Yarrow pastor named Columbia’s 2022 alumnus of the year

**Darnell Barkman**, 37, pastor of Yarrow United Mennonite Church and former Mennonite Church Canada Witness worker in the Philippines, has been named Columbia Bible College’s 2022 alumnus of the year. Barkman was noted for “working for peace, reconciliation and hope.” He and his wife Christina served in the Philippines with MC Canada Witness from 2011 to 2018, giving pastoral leadership to PeaceChurch Philippines, a church plant in Manila. The Barkmans were instrumental in the development of the Peace Assemblies Network, a network of peace-oriented individuals and churches in the Philippines. The Barkmans have been residing in Yarrow, British Columbia, since their return to Canada.

—BY AMY RINNER WADDELL



# Two MKS graduating students share their stories

Story and Photos by Joanne De Jong  
Mennonite Church Canada  
BISHOFTU, ETHIOPIA

**M**ennonite Church Canada Witness worker Werner De Jong teaches at Meserete Kristos Seminary (MKS); his classes are mostly made up of third- and fourth-year students. Fourth-year students in the English program are required to do a research paper, which they must defend at the end of the term. Two of the graduating students are profiled below.

## Ermako Awano

On any given day over the last four years, it would not be uncommon to see Ermako Awano with his hand on a hose making sure the plants on the MKS compound are watered.



*Graduating student Ermako Awano enjoys bringing shalom to Meserete Kristos Seminary by tending the seminary's garden.*

A student in the peace studies program, Awano says he believes that, in caring for the MKS garden, he is “bringing shalom to the life of the students by creating beauty and being a good steward of what God has made.” With a small budget he has managed to cultivate a wide range of plants, including mango, banana and coffee trees.

As his time at the seminary comes to an end, he says: “I now feel ownership, like this is ‘my’ compound, and it has motivated me to work.”

Some students have nicknamed him Adam.

His research paper will be related to shalom. As a peace student, he says he chose to “analyze traditional conflict resolution by studying the Gamo tribe.” Living in Arba Minch, he is interested in learning from a local Orthodox tribe whose elders are brought in, even by the government, to resolve conflicts through mediation, rather than taking cases to court. Part of their resolution process is to kneel down before the parties while holding grass and begging them to work on resolving the issue. Youth respect them and will put their guns and stones to the side when asked.

Awano is 30 years old and has been married for eight years. Before they married, his then fiancée, Yimegnushal, called and asked that they adopt an orphan. She had found a baby boy who had been abandoned with the umbilical cord still attached.

Awano gladly agreed. The child’s legs were in the shape of a half moon. That, combined with malnutrition, led the physician to suggest there was no hope. But Yimegnushal massaged the boy’s legs with fish oil day after day, and now he can walk. They named him Daniel because they believed God had rescued him.

When Awano felt called to go to MKS, Yimegnushal agreed. He says he had a vision from God that he was to go but, “although my heart was full, my pocket

was empty.” She started selling coffee and tea to cover his expenses, and he received a partial scholarship for his work in the school garden.

Looking to the future, the couple hope to serve widows and orphans. They love the Scripture from James 1:27: “*Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows.*”

## Tinsae Negusu

One may expect that if someone was the daughter of a pastor, life would be rich and full. But this was not the case for Tinsae Negusu. After being beaten and kicked on a regular basis by her mother, her mother deserted the family. And although they prayed daily for her return, it was a relief for her and her brother to be safe with only her father. After two years, her mother returned.

Negusu says the years before her mother left were formative. Her prayer life became strong. She says she felt like “God is the only one who loves me,” so she spent many hours reading the Bible, praying and leading a choir at church.

When she graduated from high school, Negusu had no idea what to do, so she tried flight attendant school, but that gave her no peace. Then she worked in a shoe factory. But still no peace. Then in information-technology service management, in a photography shop and, finally, teaching kindergarten at a Compassion compound. But still no peace. She had considered Bible school but was told she would never be eligible.

Then one day her pastor at Adame Meserete Kristos Church asked her what she wanted to do with her life. She replied, “I want to serve the Lord.” She said that she would like to go to Bible school but had been told she would never be accepted. On



**Tinsae Negusu is graduating from Meserete Kristos Seminary this year.**

the spot he called the registrar at MKS and was told she had everything she needed to be accepted.

“This was a turning point in my life,” she says. “I felt peace.”

When she started at the school, she signed up for all sorts of courses, like church history and hermeneutics. She says she finally knew that “Yes! this is where I should be. I settled. I was excited. It felt like home.”

For her research paper, Negusu is looking at the impact and necessity of a theological education.

“Many people think that theology can kill the spiritual life,” she says, “that seminary is a cemetery where the soul goes to die.”

Her survey asked those with a theological education whether they thought that it was necessary. She asked whether their spiritual practices had improved or increased, and she was excited by the responses. She now wants to share these results with churches, believing all Christians can benefit from theological education. “It is not just for ministry, but personally,” she says.

As Negusu considers her future she wonders: “In my heart I want to be a theology teacher. I want to obey what the Bible really teaches. I’ve had so many ups and downs in life, so I think I can be an encouragement to others, like the teachers in the college.” ❧

To learn more about ministry in Ethiopia, visit [mennonitechurch.ca/ethiopia](http://mennonitechurch.ca/ethiopia).



### ❧ Staff change

#### MCC Alberta appoints new church engagement coordinator



**Donita Wiebe-Neufeld** began her new role as church engagement coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Alberta this spring. She will be working as part of MCC Alberta’s development team, with its primary goal being to develop and maintain relationships with churches, aligned groups and key donors, to enhance and grow participation in the mission of MCC. “My experience as a Mennonite pastor and as a writer for *Canadian Mennonite* both provide valuable background for this work,” says Wiebe-Neufeld. “I love telling stories, and the work of MCC provides some amazing ones! I will greatly enjoy sharing these and inviting people to be a part of making them happen!” Wiebe-Neufeld views this job as an opportunity to acknowledge the church as the foundation of MCC, and to work to encourage a strong two-way partnership between the organization and congregations. “I look forward to listening to how people in the churches see MCC as helping to strengthen their local mission,” she says. “I look forward to inviting churches to see MCC as their arm of relief, development and peace work internationally.”

—BY JESSICA EVANS

### ❧ News brief

#### Frank Chisholm named a Gary Gillam Award winner



**Frank Chisholm**, Kindred Credit Union’s brand and marketing director, has been selected as one of two recipients for the Gary Gillam Award for 2022. The award, jointly sponsored by Alterna Savings and Central 1 Credit Union, recognizes and honours individuals within the Ontario and British Columbia credit-union system who have made meaningful accomplishments in social responsibility and sustainability in credit unions, or promoted credit unions as a socially responsible investment alternative. Two specific items that the award committee found most compelling were Chisholm’s proactive leadership in researching socially responsible investments (SRIs), and his leadership in developing Kindred’s Crisis Care GIC at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. By providing members with an option to deposit money into an SRI-validated guaranteed investment certificate at competitive interest rates, with Kindred allocating additional amounts to support local partners who were responding to the pandemic, the Kindred Crisis Care GIC allowed Kindred to extend financial support to more members seeking financial assistance due to the pandemic. A \$2,500 donation will be made on Chisholm’s behalf to the charity he selected—House of Friendship—a non-profit organization that provides food, housing, addiction treatment, and neighbourhood support to individuals and families.

—KINDRED CREDIT UNION

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**Schools Directory featuring Winnipeg Mennonite Elementary and Middle Schools**

# School provides 'the tools needed to thrive'

Judson Rempel

Director of Community Relations and Marketing,  
WINNIPEG MENNONITE ELEMENTARY & MIDDLE SCHOOLS, WINNIPEG

Winnipeg Mennonite Elementary & Middle Schools (WMEMS) prepares students for the next step in life. Our prayer is that every child leaves our school with the tools needed to thrive wherever they go next.

Every year, we hear from multiple alumni about the way that WMEMS affected their journey.

Savannah Olson is a graduate of the Bedson Campus and this year's alumni scholarship winner. Olson is preparing for a career in medicine and credits a lot of her success

to the lessons she learned at WMEMS.

"As simple as it sounds, I learned kindness," Olson wrote. "I have learned that a leader takes responsibility for their mistakes and works to improve the future."

Teachers of this class remember the students and have stayed in contact with many of their families over the last four years. It's a special connection that WMEMS teachers have to their students, and it's something that the kids remember.

"I think back to my time at WMEMS and remember the teachers I've met and find myself thinking back on the wisdom they've shared with me as I continue on my journey towards adulthood," alumna Kaitlyn King wrote in her application.

While we can't prepare students for every single thing they may face in the future, we hope to give them the right foundation to tackle the problems.

"I can't say that I don't feel fear for the years to come," alumna Kyra Gray wrote, "but I feel well prepared and brave enough to press on through the fear."

WMEMS is a Kindergarten to Grade 8 school with campuses in Fort Garry and St. James.



WMEMS PHOTO

**WMEMS students gain the tools and lessons to thrive wherever they go.**

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## ONLINE NOW!

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



### 'Evening for Ukraine' raises \$220,000

Peace Mennonite Church in Richmond collaborated with MCC B.C. to host a successful fundraiser for Ukraine.

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



### MDS provides meals, camps, blankets and more

Learn about some of the ways the Spirit of MDS Fund has helped Canadian organizations serve their communities.

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



### Assessment survey now available

Anabaptist Disabilities Network is offering a survey to help congregations assess their levels of accessibility to persons with various disabilities.

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



### UMEI launches renewal campaign

Leadership at UMEI Christian High School in Leamington has launched ReNew, a campaign aimed at raising enrolment.

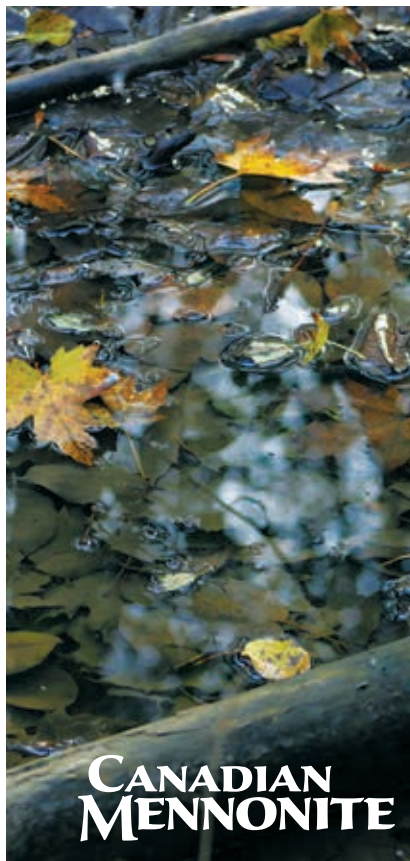
[canadianmennonite.org/renewumei](http://canadianmennonite.org/renewumei)

## Create with us a new space for honest dialogue on hard topics

**What is a faithful response to the concerns we hear on the news and see in the world around us? What are other Mennonites doing in their own households across the country?** *Canadian Mennonite* currently addresses these questions through news reports and opinion pieces. We know more can be done.

**Donate today** to help us explore these questions further—as individuals and as a community.

[www.canadianmennonite.org/donate](http://www.canadianmennonite.org/donate)



## Calendar

### Nationwide

**July 29-Aug. 1:** MC Canada Gathering 2022, in Edmonton. Theme: "We declare what we have seen and heard." Registration is now available for the in-person and virtual event at [mennonitechurch.ca/gathering2022](http://mennonitechurch.ca/gathering2022).

**July 31-Aug. 4:** MC Canada National Youth Gathering at Camp Valaqua, Water Valley, Alta. Theme: "Amplify! Giving voice to what we have seen and heard." For more information, or to register online, visit [mennonitechurch.ca/amplify](http://mennonitechurch.ca/amplify).

### British Columbia

**Until June 29:** The Mennonite Heritage Museum, in Abbotsford, presents historical and documentary films every Wednesday at 1 p.m. For more information, visit [mennonitemuseum.org](http://mennonitemuseum.org). To book seats, call 604-758-5667.

### Saskatchewan

**June 11:** MCC Saskatchewan Releaf Sale and Auction with drive-through lunch and online auction. Auction items will be on display from May 23 to June 11.

**June 23-25:** RJC presents the musical "Anastasia." An alumni and friends barbecue is planned for June 25 prior to the musical. To register for the meal, email [office@rjc.sk.ca](mailto:office@rjc.sk.ca).

### Manitoba

**June 9:** Book launch for "A World of Faith & Spirituality: Yours, Mine, Theirs & Ours," at the Canadian Mennonite University chapel, Winnipeg, at 7:30 p.m. The book, compiled and created by Ray Dirks and Manju Lodha, is about diversity in Manitoba.

**Until June 18:** The MHC Gallery: A Gallery of Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, hosts "Who am I? A retrospective," an exhibition by Milos Milidrag, who came to Canada in 1997 as a war refugee from Yugoslavia, having served as a professor in the faculty of fine arts at the University of Pristina.

### Ontario

**May 25:** Join *Canadian Mennonite* for our first online discussion panel, "The Climate Crisis—How Canadian Mennonites might best respond" at 8:00 p.m. ET. To register, visit: [canadianmennonite.org/events](http://canadianmennonite.org/events).

**June 18:** MCC Thrift on Mill, in Leamington, celebrates 40 year of thrift, beginning at 1 p.m. with musical entertainment.

**June 20:** Ray of Hope Golf Classic, at Rebel Creek

Golf Club, Petersburg, from 1 to 7 p.m. For more information, or to register, visit <https://bit.ly/3OLc8mf>.  
**Aug. 14 to 26:** Ontario Mennonite Music Camp, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo. Open to students who have finished grades 6 to 12, with a leadership-training program available for students who have finished grades 11 or 12. For more information, or to register, visit <https://bit.ly/34Hb3ch>.

**International**  
**July 1-4:** Mennonite World Conference's Global Youth Summit, in Salatiga, Indonesia. Theme: "Life in the Spirit: Learn. Serve. Worship." To learn more, visit [mwc-cmm.org/gys](http://mwc-cmm.org/gys).  
**July 5-10:** Mennonite World Conference's global assembly, in Semarang, Indonesia. Theme: "Following Jesus together across barriers." For more information, visit [mwc-cmm.org/assembly/indonesia-2022](http://mwc-cmm.org/assembly/indonesia-2022).

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

For more Calendar listings online, visit [canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar](http://canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar).



/// Classifieds

**Employment Opportunities**



**Employment Opportunity  
Team Member**

**We're hiring!**

Toronto United Mennonite Church (TUMC) is looking for an amazing person to join our **Ministry Team for Children and Youth**. The position is 15 hours per week, starting late August 2022.

To apply, please send your resumé and cover letter to [secretary@tumc.ca](mailto:secretary@tumc.ca) making sure to describe yourself and your experience, and why you'd love to work with TUMC's youth.

View the description at [tumc.ca](http://tumc.ca).



**Employment Opportunity  
Lead Pastor**

Community Mennonite Fellowship, in Drayton, Ont., seeks a **lead pastor (1.0 FTE)** who is widely gifted for pastoral ministry with focus on pastoral care, preaching and leadership.

Our congregation's faith, mission and priorities are best described in our Mission Statement:

*"Enthusiastic followers of Jesus Christ, spreading His goodness in the community and the world."*

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



**Employment Opportunities  
Pastoral Team**

Inviting applications for two pastoral positions for a combined FTE of 1.5 - 2.0.

First Mennonite Church is excited to build a new pastoral team that works along with our church community to help us grow as a community of grace, joy, and peace. We are a multi-generational, urban church of approximately 180, with Anabaptist theology and principles guiding us. God has called us to be an inclusive, affirming, Christian community. Congregants are actively involved in church ministries and programs. The new pastoral team will share pastoral responsibilities in a manner that fits with their skills and gifts.

**For information or to apply, please contact: Ruth Friesen, Search Committee Chair ([ruthdavisfriesen@gmail.com](mailto:ruthdavisfriesen@gmail.com), 780-910-2573) or Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, Mennonite Church Alberta Executive Minister ([execmin@mcab.ca](mailto:execmin@mcab.ca), 780 994-1021).**

More information about First Mennonite Church is available at: [edmontonfirst.mcab.ca](http://edmontonfirst.mcab.ca).

**Upcoming Advertising Dates**

Issue Date	Ads Due
June 27	June 13
July 11 <i>Digital-only Issue</i>	June 27
July 25	July 11
Aug. 8 <i>Digital-only Issue</i>	July 25
Aug. 22	Aug. 8
Sept. 5 <i>Digital-only Issue</i>	Aug. 22
Sept. 19 <i>Focus on Money</i>	Sept. 2
Oct. 3	Sept. 19
Oct. 17 <i>Focus on Education</i>	Oct. 3
Oct. 31	Oct. 17

PHOTO BY LINDA DOELL / TEXT BY EMILY SUMMACH

*Retired pastor and farmer Ernie Hildebrand read from his pandemic memoir, Guiding Diverse Flocks, at Bethany Manor, Saskatoon, and Osler Mennonite Church. Moving between farming and pastoring, Hildebrand reflected on his family and life transitions with gratitude and humour. In Saskatchewan, he served at Osler Mennonite from 1976 to 1980, preaching, mucking out dairy barns and leading a group of Mennonite and Bergthaler farmers to protest the building of a uranium refinery in Warman. He then worked at Swift Current Bible Institute from 1981 to 1986 before returning to pastor and raise sheep in Manitoba. Ernie and his wife Judy are currently enjoying retirement from all flocks.*



# Photo finish



PHOTO BY KATHLEEN REMPEL / TEXT BY EMILY SUMMACH

*On May 15, Warman (Sask.) Mennonite Church had a time of blessing during the morning service for the staff at Warman Happy Tots Preschool, which has been renting space in the church for 38 years. Teacher/owner Deanna Schreiner, centre, is retiring after 19 years, and current teacher Shelby Smith, left, is taking over the preschool. Pictured at right is Pastor Len Rempel.*