

CANADIAN MENNONITE

September 19, 2022 Volume 26 Number 19



‘Under the tall, tall trees of Camp Valaqua’

Youth get an ‘amplified’ education on colonial/settler relations, worshipping God, pgs. 16 to 19

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EDITORIAL

Change ahead

BY VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER
Executive Editor



Once knew a young child for whom change was extremely difficult.

Whether the change came as a surprise or whether the child anticipated the happy results of an expected change, it was hard to move from “here” to “there.” Change can be difficult for people of all ages.

As we assembled this issue of the magazine, change emerged as a recurring theme. I counted at least 25 uses of the word, along with the concept of transition elsewhere in this issue.

There’s the poignant lament on p. 13 about how the traditional model of Sunday school has waned for one congregation. An Alberta congregation recently explored the theme, “Finding God in uncertain times” (p. 24). An article on p. 20 reports on changes in language and practices at a Mennonite university. On page 11, columnist Randy Haluza-DeLay calls for transformation—change—in the world systems that are causing the climate crisis we face.

A change in leadership of this magazine is on the horizon. I will retire from my role as executive editor of *Canadian Mennonite* at the end of October. This planned change comes as I envision a new life chapter with more time for family, volunteering and individual editing projects. I look forward to less pressure from the bi-weekly deadlines, but I will miss the dedicated *CM* team and *CM*’s many faithful readers. You can read about my successor on p. 35.

Change, whether at the personal, congregational, institutional, or global

level, can be good, but we also struggle with the uncertainty about the future. Consider the people of Israel, travelling in the harsh wilderness, away from slavery and toward a promised land. Moses reminded them often of the blessings ahead, and yet, they often got stuck in the present challenges. God fed the people with miraculous food from heaven. And yet, they complained, “*If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we used to eat in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at*” (Numbers 11:4-6). In this midst of this enormous transition, they allowed the hardships to obscure the presence of God and the promise of a fruitful future.

In the column on p. 9, pastor Bill Christieson writes that it matters what stories we tell ourselves about how the world works. As we face transitions, Bill invites us to choose “a narrative of hope.” He writes, “In a time of change the church has the potential to be both a place of stability and a catalyst for change in the direction of the gospel.”

Repeatedly, the biblical story shows that, as the people of God confront change, we can cling to the unchangeable nature of a loving God. A favourite hymn says, “Great is thy faithfulness. . . . Thou changest not/ thy compassions, they fail not. / As thou hast been / thou forever wilt be” (*Voices Together*, no. 419).

For the world, the church and this magazine’s new executive editor, I pray for wisdom and stamina in the changes ahead. Great is God’s faithfulness.

New writer

Speaking of change, I’m pleased to welcome Barry Bergen to the *Canadian Mennonite* team, with the assignment to report from the Leamington and Windsor areas. Barry attends Faith Mennonite Church and is a school-teacher. He wrote occasionally for the magazine in the past. Two of his current pieces appear on pages 32 and 33.

Join CM online

October 5 is the date for *CM*’s second online event, and you are invited to join. The Zoom conversation will be about reconciliation with Indigenous neighbours, and three guests will address the question, “What steps are you taking in your context to further reconciliation?” Register at canadianmennonite.org/events.

Seeking Christmas art

For the past several years, artwork created by Mennonite students has graced the pages of *CM*’s Christmas issue. Once again, we’re inviting elementary and high school students in Mennonite schools and congregations to submit original art on the theme, “The Christmas story.” We will consider this art for publication in the Nov. 28 issue. If possible, please send high-resolution digital versions of the art. Paper submissions are also welcome, but all submissions should arrive by the Nov. 10 deadline. Please invite the young artists you know to share their art.

Correction

The title to the land of Bethel Mennonite Church in Langley, British Columbia, was transferred from Bethel to North Langley Community Church. Incorrect information appeared in the “Bethel Mennonite leaves MC B.C.” article, Aug. 22, page 22. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error. ❧



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PHOTO: JOANI NEUFELDT

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FEATURE

Faithful constancy

How a congregation can respond to sexual abuse in the family

By Bruce Hiebert

He might be the youth leader, enthusiastically singing the loudest, or the young mother protectively watching over her children as they run among the pews, or the strong-willed divorcée who is the staunch activist for women's justice, or the angry old man suffering from cancer while his wife sits quietly beside him. What they share is they are all survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

That abuser was likely not a stranger, not a person in power, and not a social authority figure. That abuser could have been a member of the family—a stepfather, a brother, an uncle, or a sister, an aunt, a grandmother, maybe even a father or mother. That abuser might have been a survivor of childhood sexual abuse at the hands of yet another family member.

Survivors of sexual abuse might routinely sit in the pews, they might be active in the church, or they might just drop in infrequently. But they are there. Often, their children are there and sometimes so are their friends, their partners and the people who care about them. It's possible that their abusers are there, too.

Weekly, monthly or occasionally, sexual abuse survivors are part of congregational life. They do not advertise their suffering or background. They may not even have told their partners, and almost certainly are not public about their experiences. The only manifestations of their troubles might be emotional outbursts, deep anxiety about children, depression and anger; traits shared with many people who have not experienced childhood sexual abuse.

What brings survivors of sexual abuse to the church? When they come to me as a counsellor, they describe how they find in the church connections, community, stability, reframing values, ordered thinking and models of a better life. They are there to find a way to cope and to move forward. It's not so much about their faith, which is often intense, as what faith can do for them that brings them. The following stories, all composites, share their experiences.

One person who no longer attends church activities has been clear that church life was a powerful place for him not to be a victim. He developed his competence and capacities as he helped in the youth group without the fear that haunted his home life. It wasn't easy, but he

became a respected member of the congregation, and that gave him the strength to leave home and the self-trust that he could live a new life.

Another explained how the beliefs and practices she found in church gave meaning and purpose to her life. She particularly appreciated the evangelicalism of the congregation, the strong belief perspectives and the constant outreach activities. She struggles with deep depression and regularly questions all her life and beliefs. But she comes back to life through the hard work of participation in congregational activities.

Another appreciates the perspective of hope and forgiveness that permeates the beliefs of the congregation. He resonates with the liturgy and finds the pastor a warm and caring resource.

Another person sits hidden and silent, protected by her husband's presence. It is his family congregation, and in it she finds stability that masks the chaos in her own life.

What a congregation can do

For most congregations, sexual abuse in families is a hidden phenomenon. Pastors rarely know, and even close friends inside the church may be ignorant that it has happened in someone's past. Yet probably every congregation has one or more sexual-abuse survivors in its midst.

Responding to this hidden reality of suffering is difficult. There are at least four things every congregation can do:

- **Try to understand.** Everyone needs to understand the prevalence of sexual, physical and emotional violence in families. These are multi-generational processes that are hard to break, as parents who suffered abuse in turn abuse their children or inadvertently create the conditions that lead to abuse.

It takes a great deal of work, good therapists and a supportive community to break the cycles. Blame doesn't help, nor does a focus on "fixing" individuals. This is long-haul work that goes on all around us and in our congregations.

- **Have good policies.** Knowing that sexual abuse is prevalent, a congregation needs to have good



RAWPIXEL PHOTO / © ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

Remain faithful as a community in Christ. An important experience for one recovering from sexual abuse is the acceptance of a community in pursuit of the gospel.

safe-church policies that are well understood by adults and leaders in the congregation. There are legal requirements to report abuse that involves children. Plus, good policies create a calm framework, so people know what to do when cases of abuse are reported or when people become suspicious there are serious problems.

When everyone knows whom to talk to, and what resources the congregation can supply, effective action is possible.

- **Provide confidential support.** Sexual abuse typically carries with it a great deal of shame and guilt. People usually don't voluntarily disclose this type of experience; it might come out in pastoral or close community relationships. Then it is helpful to know that the church community can provide confidential support. This support might require a commitment that lasts for years, since this type of experience is not

easily resolved. A congregation might want to offer survivors a counselling scholarship or subsidy as well.

- **Remain faithful as a community in Christ.** An important experience for one recovering from sexual abuse is the acceptance of a community in pursuit of the gospel.

What individuals can do as part of a faithful community

- **Stay calm.** A congregation that can stay calm in the face of any adversity, or change (and manages the change effectively), is one that both models emotional maturity and makes emotional maturity possible.

The survivors of abuse are hyper-sensitive to change, and when those around them are genuinely calm in the midst of stress, survivors can see the possibility of new routes for personal transformation. Or at least

they can see the possibility of staying in one place long enough to build healing personal connections.

Conversely, when people in the congregation become highly emotional, the situation can create more problems for survivors. A highly emotional environment triggers destructive behaviours and intensifies their own emotional reactions. Congregations might find it difficult to stay calm when problems are real, but doing so is one of the most healing attributes of a Christian community.

- **Be transparent.** Gaslighting, twisting the facts, lying and false questioning—these are the norm in families where sexual abuse exists. For survivors, those behaviours lead to terrible confusion and mistrust of others.

Long-term trust can happen when there are open processes and transparent systems where the rules are easy to

see, and trust leads to healing. When members of a congregation are open about their thinking and clear on the facts, the community models good emotional processes and helps assure those who are suffering anxiety feel that they are understood and safe.

- **Be patient.** Becoming highly emotional is the norm for abuse survivors. Slow church processes allow survivors to move past their initial reactions and get to a place of calm and acceptance. This allows them to improve their relationships and heal, even when circumstances require change.

Although this can be frustrating for many in a congregation, when it seems like decisions must be made, quick action only sets the stage for more problems for abuse survivors, as they feel abandoned. Opportunities for healing happen when congregations listen carefully, take time for slow processes and work at gentle decision-making.

- **Be open about issues and problems.** Avoidance of issues only creates more difficulties for survivors.

Their experiences have taught them not to trust and have made them hyper-sensitive to problems. They are used to denial and know that it leads to even more pain to come. When people in congregations try to be “nice,” and settle things behind closed doors, it only teaches the abused persons that their situation is dangerous.

Since, in everyday life, conflict is normal, to ensure those conflicts do not trigger reactions for abuse survivors, it is important to have open processes for managing them. Those processes, in and of themselves, model better ways for survivors to operate in their own lives.

- **Make a place for all children.**

Perhaps the most healing thing a church can do is to include the children. When congregations ensure that children have an opportunity to find friends, express themselves and be part of a community, children can see what is possible for

When members of a congregation are open about their thinking and clear on the facts, the community models good emotional processes and helps assure those who are suffering anxiety feel that they are understood and safe.

their own future.

With congregational acceptance, children can obtain the balance and connections that give them a chance to thrive, even when Mom or Dad is struggling. Add to that the babysitting, family befriending and social inclusion that can come from ordinary person-to-person relationships, and the number of healing opportunities multiplies.

You can be assured that the eyes of the children of abuse are carefully observing and trying to imitate the best in what they experience in their church.

Sexual abuse is all too common in our society. Its scars are everywhere,

including among people in the church. But the congregational community, in its faithfulness, is one of the most powerful tools for changing that reality. By staying inclusive, calm and family-oriented, congregations help slowly, from generation to generation, to heal these terrible hurts. ☿



Bruce Hiebert, Ph.D., is a former pastor and currently divides his time between teaching business ethics and working as a clinical counsellor. He can be reached at brucehiebert@shaw.ca.

For discussion

1. How does your congregation support participants who are suffering? Is this support public and organized, or mostly done privately? How do people in the congregation support each other on a regular basis? How well are children included in supportive networks?
2. Bruce Hiebert writes that survivors of abuse appreciate the church because it provides “connections, community, stability, reframing values, ordered thinking and models of a better life.” What might be some examples of ways that a congregation can provide these things? How important are these character traits for everyone in the congregation?
3. Safe-church policies that are well-understood are important for a congregation, says Hiebert. Does your church have such a policy? What makes these policies so important?
4. Hiebert writes that it is important to stay calm, patient and to have a transparent process if there is an abuse issue. Why is it so important to proceed slowly and deliberately? What are the dangers of becoming highly emotional?
5. “[C]ongregational community in its faithfulness is one of the most powerful tools” for healing the scars of sexual abuse, says Hiebert. Do you find this idea heartening or daunting? How could your congregation strengthen its bonds of community?

—By Barb Draper

See related Safe Church Policy resources at www.commonword.ca/go/783

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/// Readers write

✉ Two editorials lauded

Re: “Two things not up for debate” and “Acting ‘a little strange’” editorials, May 16 and June 27, respectively.

What a great editorial. You are expressing my thoughts completely. When the abortion question was discussed in the 1980s at conference and at our Mennonite Central Committee board, I voiced similar thoughts, and many men present were shocked. Having worked in Haiti with women struggling to feed their families, and in Canada with women shamed for becoming pregnant, I had given this concern much thought. What is worse: for a pregnancy to cause break-up in the family, or for an abortion with possible death of the mother?

Also appreciated your June 27 editorial. A good friend said recently, if Jesus and his sackcloth friend, John, lived in our town, would I be attracted to these men living “beatnik” style lives? Made me wonder about myself. In the Bible, we read and thoughtfully reflect on his words, without actually seeing these simple, out-of-the-mainstream men.

MARGOT FIEGUTH, WATERLOO,, ONT.

The writer attends Waterloo North Mennonite Church.

✉ No prior claim to Niagara, reader claims

Re: “We gratefully acknowledge . . .” feature, June 27, page 4.

Due to the checkered history of southern Ontario, we do not have as many opportunities to acknowledge prior ownership of the lands we live on, as do some other parts of the country.

Although there are smatterings of archaeological remains in the Niagara Region dating back some 15,000 years, settlements of any size only date from the development of agriculture as the main food-producing activity a couple of centuries before the arrival of the Europeans.

When the French first visited the area, Niagara was populated by an Iroquoian people, known to the French as Neutrals, because they did not take part in the wars between the Hurons to the north and the (then) Five Nations to the east. With the decimation of the Hurons by the Five Nations during 1648-50, the Five Nations then turned on the Neutrals and effectively eliminated them from history.

After 1650, there were no permanent settlements in the Niagara area until the 1780s, except for the

French (later British) Fort Niagara on the east side of the Niagara River. Traders and hunters, including Quebecois and Mississauga members, occasionally traversed the area.

After the success of the American Revolution, King George III and governors Carleton and Haldimand provided land for loyalist refugees in Canada, as they did for members of the (now) Six Nations who had supported the British. Haldimand did pay the Mississauga a nominal sum for the land along the Grand River, which the Six Nations now occupy.

So land ownership in Niagara and along the Grand River was granted by the British Crown for services rendered, and there was never any suggestion in 1780, or afterwards, that an existing Indigenous nation had a prior claim to Niagara.

KEVIN MCCABE, ST. CATHARINES, ONT.

The writer attends Grace Mennonite Church, St. Catharines.

✉ Curiosity and patience can bring insight

Re: “My opinion on opinions,” June 27, page 12.

Who would have guessed that Troy Watson’s column would have included the gem, “Humility, inquisitiveness, curiosity and creativity open us up to the flow of insight and inspiration”?

For those who appreciate his bit of navel gazing and sage advice, you might also appreciate the philosophy and teaching of Eduardo de Bono, the founder and principal teacher of “lateral thinking.” De Bono has helped me throughout my adult life, in my work and as a parent, and especially as a parent of children “on the spectrum.” We’ve learned to slow down and rethink actions and reactions for better results. For example, we’ve learned to teach about time by removing the second and minute hands from the clocks in the house.

It took me forever to figure out why my son would reject toonies and loonies for lunch money but loved a five-dollar bill. After rejecting four toonies for a five-dollar bill one day, when he was well aware of the difference in value, I asked him to explain. He, of course, thought that the reason was obvious, but he humoured his not-so-smart father and explained that when you have paper money the cashier is always obligated to figure out the change; when you have the change, you must calculate the amount yourself, and could be embarrassed for not knowing the amount quickly.

Many other lessons have been learned through curiosity and patience. Thanks for the reminder.

PETER DUECK, VANCOUVER

✉ Warning labels should suffice for works by disgraced authors, preachers

Re: “Counterpoint: Sinful teachers should find other ways to serve God” letter, Aug. 22, page 8.

Carol Penner addresses a serious concern, but I believe she must be reminded that these men did not write immoral heresy, although their conduct was wrong, abusive and destructive.

Are we in agreement that there is an element of duplicity in the complexity of thoughts and behaviours of our lives? Horrifying when it becomes obvious for those who serve in public service.

I suggest a statement describing the author’s immoral realities could be printed in the preface to their books or videos. Readers and viewers could then choose to read the book or watch the video.

As a teacher, Penner must decide if she wants to keep promoting John Howard Yoder and Bruxy

Cavey in her class material.

But I believe that both Yoder and Cavey do not represent all of the pitfalls and traps that must be avoided. The issues are more complex. I also believe that university students are reading books and discussing issues that are more potentially dangerous to them than an author who wrote well but messed up sorrowfully.

DAVID SHANTZ, MONTREAL

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

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Kampen—Yannick Walter (b. Aug. 17, 2022), to Christine and David Kampen Robinson, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg

Lichty—Micah John (b. July 30, 2022), to Tabitha and David Lichty, First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Wagler—Alivia Lynn (b. Aug. 9, 2022) to Krista (Poole Mennonite, Milverton, Ont.) and Willy Wagler (Mapleview Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.).

Baptisms

Julia Dyck—Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, Aug. 14, 2022.

Weddings

DeFehr/Zarrillo—Mitchell DeFehr (Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg) and Lauren Zarrillo, in Winnipeg, Aug. 6, 2022.

Kasdorf/Sapach—Cassidy Kasdorf (Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg) and Quinn Sapach, in Winnipeg, July 23, 2022

Deaths

Block—Peter, 94 (b. Aug. 26, 1927; d. April 22, 2022), Steinbach Mennonite, Man.

Brenneman—Vernon, 81 (b. March 3, 1941; d. Aug. 4, 2022), Poole Mennonite, Milverton, Ont.

Duncan—David, 69 (b. Nov. 4, 1952; d. June 26, 2022), First

Mennonite, Edmonton.

Dyck—Marlies, 57 (b. Aug. 24, 1964; d. July 28, 2022), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Giesbrecht—Leona, 78 (b. May 19, 1944; d. Aug. 16, 2022), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Guenther—Phil, 61 (d. July 29, 2022), Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

Nikkel—Corny, 95 (b. April 12, 1926; d. July 23, 2022), Steinbach Mennonite, Man.

Nikkel—Helge (Hildebrand), 90 (b. June 8, 1932; d. Aug. 1, 2022), Steinbach Mennonite, Man.

Penner—Margaret, 94 (b. July 2, 1928; d. July 31, 2022), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Roth—Melvin Kenneth (Ken), 86 (b. June 24; 1936; d. Aug. 10, 2022), East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Sawatzky—Nick, 94 (b. Sept. 25, 1927; d. Aug. 5, 2022), W-K United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

VanRiesen—Heide (nee Tgahrt), 81 (b. April 22, 1941; d. June 24, 2022), Erie View Mennonite, Port Rowan, Ont.

Wiebe—Agatha (nee Warkentin), 101 (b. Aug. 26, 1920; d. Aug. 22, 2022), Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon.

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

FROM OUR LEADERS

A narrative of hope

Bill Christieson

This fall is unlike any fall in my memory. As a new Mennonite pastor, I am entering this fall listening to the hearts and minds of the congregation at Foothills Mennonite Church and helping discern how our church lives faithfully within our neighbourhood and beyond.

After two-and-a-half years of pandemic-inhibited ministry, churches must be re-engaging our contexts with fresh eyes and imaginations for what God is doing. In a time of disruptive change, the church has the potential to be both a place of stability and a catalyst for change in the direction of the gospel.

Individuals and communities struggle to establish identity and purpose in this climate of uncertainty and polarization. We are surrounded by manifold narratives that vie for allegiance—stories describing how to understand the world and our place in it.

These narratives we appropriate have a determinant influence on our development, personalities and actions. What we believe about the reality of the world around us shapes us. Narratives create reality, and our identities and lives are shaped by the narratives of the

communities that we inhabit.

No one is exempt from the influence of narratives. They are ubiquitous. Stories give structure and meaning to every context we inhabit. However, they are never neutral. Every narrative shapes us in a particular direction. So it is important that we are attentive to the narratives in our lives.

A redemptive role of the church is to come alongside our communities, engage real people and real life, and enforce narratives that exemplify the redemptive activity of God in the world. The church engages neighbours and neighbourhoods around God's vision for restoration for all.

The church is an agent of hope. By building relationships with real people in their communities, and engaging real-life stories of their neighbours, the church brings people together toward a dominant narrative of hope.

As an active participant in a community, the church has an essential role in shaping the shared narrative of that community. The gospel is the presence and power of God to change the world. The gospel narrative has an impact on the community when it is

embodied by the church community in its context.

The church helps to shape the community's shared narrative in a way that reflects God's creative and active participation in the world. The church invites people to form their identity in what God has done and is doing. The church shapes the narratives of the community toward the redemptive work of God in the world.

People develop an understanding of the positive impact of their lives in the world and the integral place of the church in the world. The gospel infuses the various shared narratives with imagination and creativity, redeemed for God's purposes. God's redemptive work is truly the hope of the world, and God is calling the church to active participation in that redemption.



Bill Christieson is pastor of Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary. He recently completed a doctor of ministry degree in Christian community development.

A moment from yesterday



For a few brief months in spring 1525, the first Anabaptist congregation flickered to life in this house in Zollikon, a village on the edge of Zurich, Switzerland. According to the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online, the group attempted to become a "free church," administering communion, preaching, discipline and baptism on their own without reliance on the state church. By late summer, harassment and imprisonment had worn down the fledgling congregation. Their attempt was "ahead of [their] time."

Text: Laureen Harder-Gissing
Photo: The Mennonite Story /
Mennonite Archives of Ontario



archives.mhsc.ca

IN THE IMAGE

A tale of two clans

By Ed Olfert

This summer, I attended two family reunions separated by one week. The Olferts, my paternal family, gathered at Pike Lake for several days, while the Warkentins, the maternal side, met a week later at Shekinah, a church camp near my home.

Both families, the offspring of my grandparents on both sides, typically meet every three years. With the confusion of COVID-19 concerns, it's been much longer. There have been a number of deaths in the interim.

The culture of these two origin families could not be more different. The Warkentins are a more cerebral folk, where education, dignity and a sense of family history are important. They are eloquent, they write stuff down, and they sing passionately in four-part harmony.

The Olferts mostly get sweaty and shout often. Jeering is an art form. They tease, giggle and wave their arms when they converse. Lying is no sin in Olfert culture. Olferts sing too, but mostly the old favourites of 70 years ago ("I Saw Esau Sittin' on a Seesaw").

Olferts deal with the cost of the rented facilities by shrugging toward an empty KFC pail set nearby. Warkentins, meanwhile, bring laptops and have lists. Bills are handed out that include cents.

Nowhere is the difference—and the similarity—more striking than at the Sunday morning worship services. Strong Mennonite roots on both sides ensure that there will be services at both events and, indeed, worship is the highlight of both weekends.

Olferts crowd into a cook shack to escape the hot sun. They pile on each other. A pair of ukuleles lead music. We try to recall Sunday school songs that were learned as children at Superb Mennonite Church. My sister leaps to her feet, shouts and waves her arms. No, it's not an ecstatic worship experience; she is trying to organize us into singing rounds. The topic of the service is simply to acknowledge and tell the stories of those family members who have died since we last met. It is an emotional and important time.

The Warkentins, meanwhile, set chairs into rows. A piano is called into service, along with stringed instruments. There is a worship leader and song leader, and songs are chosen from *Voices Together*. A microphone is pressed into service; there will be no hollering here. Again, we name those who have died since we last met. In a preplanned manner, folks come forward to tell the stories of the lives and deaths of loved ones. This weekend,

candles are lit. This weekend, my sister, the same sister, a nursing school administrator and professor, brings a sermon. The harmony is strong and striking.

In these two portrayals, with differences that evoke giggles, what remains as a commonality? What is it that makes them both good?

Both families have their spiritual roots in Superb Mennonite, which once stood on the bald prairie in west-central Saskatchewan. Both families contain many who have been significantly influenced by time spent in the warm embrace of that church community. In my own experience, it wasn't until I moved further afield that I learned how much spiritual energy can be burned up in critiquing the spirituality of another person, or another group. That was foreign to Superb Mennonite.

A cousin, a double cousin who was present at each gathering, brought his ukulele to each. At one point, he talked about the final days of the Superb church, when they were few in number. He pointed out that when things got a little harder, a little less clear as to what the future might bring for that remnant, there was a song that appeared more and more often in the church repertoire. Then he led us into that song: "Most of All Let Love Guide You."

Yes. ☸



Ed Olfert (p2peho@gmail.com) appreciates deep roots.

Et cetera

JoinHands supports church building in Angola

The Igreja Evangélica dos Irmãos Menonitas in Kalunga, Angola, has met in a hangar since 2015. There are now 185 members and they have worked together to make bricks and construct the walls of a new worship space (the men build, the women carry water and cook food). Mennonite Men's JoinHands Church Building Fund, which is supported by Mennonite Church Canada and the Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission, has granted US\$10,000 towards the building's new roof.

Source: Mennonite Church Canada



PHOTO COURTESY OF MC CANADA

MIND AND SOUL

Climate imagination

Randolph Haluza-DeLay

Faith and imagination go hand in hand. Addressing climate change decidedly requires both. Can Christians imagine a different world that takes better care of creation and all human brothers and sisters?

Over the past few weeks I have been intricately involved with a team creating material for people and faith communities, with the intent to imagine more effective responses to the climate crisis. We have focused on climate action from the perspective of solidarity with partners in the Global South, Indigenous Peoples and youth.

September is Climate Action Month for Kairos, an ecumenical justice organization for whom I currently work. The theme is “Decolonize Climate Action,” which combines social justice and creation care, and may better approximate God’s vision for shalom. We need social transformation.

Climate activists and scientists are increasingly following the lead of organizations from the majority world—what we often call the Global South—about the need for profoundly different socioeconomic and political systems, and different worldviews than that which has come to dominate the planet. To decolonize climate action

means to listen to, and learn from, others.

Even the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has announced the need for social transformation. It has also named colonialism among the causes of climate change.

European imperialism and colonialism created a world-system that persists to this day. In this system, certain voices have more power than others. A key element of colonialism is the drive to capture the wealth from so-called “natural resources.”

Colonialism created worldviews in which creation—including humans, especially Indigenous Peoples and Sub-Saharan Africans—became strictly commodities. Ultimately, this system of economics, religious justification, worldview, political domination, military might and technology created the current global system of wealthy and poorer countries.

To decolonize climate action means to change these systems.

Industrialized and wealthy countries like Canada have contributed the lion’s share of climate-causing emissions. Our “fair share” of the causes should translate equitably into a “fair share” of the money and resources toward

solutions. Mostly that means financial and technology transfers to those who are already facing an unfair burden of climate impacts.

To decolonize climate action means to contribute our fair share.

The world has failed to adequately address the climate emergency. It may be that the existing system is too caught up in old ways and structures. I am reminded of the aphorism: “It’s easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.” What would it take for Christians to imagine a different world?

Back in 2009, the World Council of Churches released a statement on eco-justice that began by recognizing “the need for a drastic transformation at all levels in life and society in order to end the ecological indebtedness and restore right relationships between peoples and between people and the earth.”

To do any of this means to advocate to political authorities about the world we want to see and the justice we want to see done.

It also means changing ourselves and the church. Should Mennonites lead on transformative lifestyles equal to the circumstances of decolonization and climate crisis? Can church leaders and congregants talk more about how we imagine social transformation? How do we act in faith to make it so? ❧



Randolph Haluza-DeLay is interim ecological justice coordinator for Kairos. Opinions are his own.

Et cetera

New MB historical grant honours Paraguayan theologian

The Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission created a new grant in honour of Paraguayan theologian Alfred Neufeld, who died in 2020 and was known for advocating Anabaptism through his work with Mennonite World Conference (MWC). The Global Church History Project Grant seeks to fund projects documenting stories of congregations in the international community of Mennonite Brethren outside North America. The grant’s first recipients are Anička Fast of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, and Rodney Hollinger-Janzen of Goshen, Ind., for their project to translate Fast’s doctoral dissertation on African Mennonite church formation into French. Fast is a mission educator who lives in Burkina Faso. The \$2,000 grant for the translation project will make her research accessible to French-speaking Mennonites in Africa. Other grants support Buduma Ramesh of Bangalore, India, for research into social forces impacting Dalit Christians in India; and Goshen College student Denisse Aguilar for research on shifting traditions of MB women’s clothing and gender roles.

Source: Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission



Alfred Neufeld

 TALES FROM THE UNENDING STORY

Grasping God's glory

Joshua Penfold

Sometimes I wish God would indisputably appear in some fantastically obvious way, eliminating my wrestling, struggling and doubt.

Something like what happens in II Chronicles 7: *"When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. The priests could not enter the temple of the Lord because the glory of the Lord filled it. When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the Lord above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshipped and gave thanks to the Lord."*

How could someone witness fire from heaven and the glory of the Lord, so tangibly present that the priests couldn't enter, and not fall down and worship? It's among a host of fantastic displays of God's glory in the Bible. But even things like the plagues in Egypt or manna from heaven have been explained away by some as natural, albeit peculiar or infrequent, phenomena. The list of miracles with proposed natural explanations are numerous, but reading of fire from heaven and the glory of the Lord enveloping the temple gives me this pang of longing, wishing that my eyes could witness something so tangible

and irrefutable.

But I wonder about the way my mind imagines this description. Fire from heaven, could that be lightning? Even if it was, the timing and location could hardly be coincidence.

What about the glory of the Lord? I imagine some bright ethereal light of substance that cannot be penetrated or looked directly upon. Maybe I've watched too many movies. I realize I really don't have a great understanding of the glory of the Lord. We talk and sing about it, and we have our own mental images of it, but what actually is it?

My fantastic little *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* defines it as "the unapproachable and mighty manifestation of the immediate presence of God. The biblical concept of glory carries with it connotations of inexpressible beauty and majesty."

I still can't really imagine what that looks like, but I suppose that's fitting when trying to describe or understand God, since a finite being can't use limited vocabulary to describe the glory of an infinite God. Although, I imagine that when you witness it, you'll know.

And maybe I do know. Maybe I have witnessed the glory of God, God's holiness, beauty and majesty, on display, and it has left me unsuccessfully

grasping for words to help others understand even just a taste of what I've experienced, felt and known in the core of my being. These moments of glory are what poets, theologians, artists and musicians are often trying to express, and sometimes our hearts can, in some small way, relate, even if we can't understand or express our familiarity.

But sometimes I still long for that big, obvious moment of glory when all who are present irrefutably bear witness to God's glory. Or maybe I shouldn't be so keen, for just as Israel's experience of God's glory was magnificent, so was God's promise if they disobeyed: being uprooted from the land, rejecting the Temple, disaster to the people.

Maybe I'm okay with the whispers of God's glory; maybe I need a healthier holy fear of God's glory. I'm once again so thankful for Jesus, who was the glory of God manifest to us. Hebrews 1:3 says: *"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word."* Although I will ever struggle to understand the fully-God, fully-man of Jesus, it is still easier to look to Jesus as the manifestation of glory than to imagine the abstract and somewhat terrifying glory of God as a consuming fire and unapproachable presence. ❧



Joshua Penfold (penfoldjoshua@gmail.com) is bemused by the bewildering, bizarre, yet beautiful Bible.

Et cetera

Young people demand climate justice

A group of activists drew attention to the urgency of the climate crisis with a protest on Sept. 2 during the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) held in Karlsruhe, Germany. "The protest was organized by people from around the world," said Helena Funk of Germany, one of the organizers. "They were all different ages, from a variety of confessions." Young people especially called on the WCC and member churches to recognize the climate crisis and act accordingly. The protest was joined by other climate activists.

Source: World Council of Churches



WCC PHOTO BY PAUL JEFFREY

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Lament for Sunday school

Ruth Boehm

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

Sara Garnet and I were cleaning out the Sunday school classrooms of Faith Mennonite Church in Leamington, Ont., with heavy hearts one Wednesday afternoon. We had put it off for a long time. It felt like we were cleaning out a home after a death had taken place. I went home at lunch time and wrote this lament for the end of Sunday school since the beginning of COVID-19, with a sense that this is really the end of the model of Sunday school as we have known it. For a pastor who has taught Sunday school for 33 years-plus and the education coordinator, this is a deep loss and lament.

It just stopped March 2020.
The *Shine* curriculum from 2019-2020 is still in the cupboard.
The unlit Christ candles.
The construction paper.
The songs up on the wall.
The poster for Global Family is faded.
The bulletin boards show signs of neglect.

I remember when the metal cabinets for each classroom were built.
Full of promise.
Each cabinet supplied with fresh scissors, markers and masking tape.
Playdough for the Jr. Youth boys to keep their hands busy during class.
Music playing when the students arrived.

Games for students in the main area.
Singing shyly and with robust vigour.
Families coming.
Some dropping off their children.
Some staying for coffee.

The last two years one experiment after the other.
Hopes of returning to what was.

The model of Sunday school had been in decline for a while.
But this feels final.
The end of Sunday school as a way of teaching children.

Hopes now being packed away one battery-operated candle at a time.



FAITH MENNONITE ARCHIVE PHOTO

Sara Garnet with Christmas angels, undated.

Unused curriculum tossed into recycling.
Metal cabinets emptied.
Ready for what comes next.

But what will come?
No clue.
Absolutely no clue.

The song lyrics read: "In the bulb there is a flower.
In the seed an apple tree."
But it sure hurts to pack it all up.
Unsure of what seeds are being held for what it is to come.

Unseeing.
Unknowing.
Waiting.
Mystery.

But I hope.
I so hope.

I want our children to know that God immensely loves them.
God's love is for them as they are—

created with wonder and promise.

I want our families to read the Bible.
A rich resource for life. Complicated.
Contradictory.
Holy. Living.

I want our families to know each other.
Communities of people who follow Jesus together.

I want our young people to know that the invitation to follow Jesus is for them.
They don't have to be perfect, or have it all figured out, or believe everything in the *Confession of Faith*, but be open to grace and love and the power of the Spirit.

I want our parents to receive strength for their journey of parenting.
To take delight in their partners.
To know that the practical ways of peace are doable now and yet need regular practice with others.
To trust that deconstructing and reconstructing is just a regular part of a life of faith, not an all or nothing.

I want our adults to keep on learning, asking questions and growing in their relationship with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

I'd like our frail elderly to have ways of sharing their wisdom and their questions with us.

I want us to not be stuck in one model of doing things, but to keep on exploring to find what works now.

I want us to know about our world and together figure out how to share the love and grace and light of Christ.
We have problems, real problems with racism, and all the other isms, too.
And Christ's love speaks into these with hope.

So, I lament. I grieve.
I trust.
And I hope.

Lord Jesus, lead us by your Spirit. ☩

Canadian Mennonite online event will explore Indigenous-settler reconciliation

Canadian Mennonite

The second event in a series of online discussions that *Canadian Mennonite* is hosting will take place on Zoom on Wednesday, Oct. 5 at 8 p.m. ET.

Hosted by Aaron Epp, *CM*'s online media manager, the discussion will explore Indigenous-settler relations and some of the concrete steps Canadian Mennonites are taking to further reconciliation.

We asked two of the guests who will be joining Epp—Doyle Wiebe and Allegra Friesen Epp—to write a few paragraphs introducing themselves and to identify a question they hope to bring to the discussion.

Niigaan Sinclair, a native studies professor at the University of Manitoba and a *Winnipeg Free Press* columnist, will also take part in the discussion on Oct. 5. You can register to attend at canadianmennonite.org/events.

Doyle Wiebe



I am a fourth-generation farmer in Langham, Sask. The most public, intentional and ongoing way that I am expressing my wish to assist in reconciliation efforts is through the Treaty Land Sharing Network.

A farmer friend was part of the organizing group that first came together to find a way to counter the fallout from the Colten Boushie trial and verdict, in keeping with the language of the treaties about sharing the land. After many months of discussions with First Nation leaders, a website was developed identifying where a landowner is inviting Indigenous people to come on the land.

I have placed a sign on some land we own that has the best chance of having the kinds of plants and animals for harvesting food, medicines or for ceremonial purposes. It says, "Treaty Land Sharing Network, Indigenous people welcome."

The land is registered on the network website along with my phone number

to call—not to get permission because that is already understood, but to get the precise location and provide notice to avoid possible misunderstandings with neighbours. No vehicles or fires are allowed on the property and respect for growing crops, gates, etc., is expected. It can be the start of a relationship.

This is important to me because one of the conclusions I have come to after years of just watching our society devolve into an "us and them" mindset is that we as settler people stole the dignity of First Nations peoples and we need to find ways to give it back.

My question: **How can we turn around the perception that non-Indigenous folks will lose something if we recognize what was stolen from Indigenous folks? How do we realize that we can all gain something by healing the relationship between Indigenous peoples and settlers?**

Allegra Friesen Epp



Reconciliation is important to me because I care about people and I care about justice. To this day, the Canadian government and settler society do not treat Indigenous peoples and nations with dignity and respect.

I am a settler on Turtle Island and the work of reconciliation, decolonization and solidarity is my responsibility. It is also my calling, as a Christian, to challenge systems of oppression and to actively work for peace.

I recently completed an internship with Mennonite Church Canada's Indigenous-settler Relations office and Community Peacemaker Teams' Turtle Island Solidarity Network.

The most transformative part of my internship was the work I did on the ground. Last year, I accompanied Indigenous land defenders in Wet'suwet'en territory. This is where I really began to



PHOTO BY EMILY SUMMACH

understand what Indigenous self-determination and self-governance look like. This is where the atrocities of settler colonialism became particularly apparent to me as I witnessed Coastal GasLink—backed by Canadian government and military—lay pipe through Wet'suwet'en territory without consent.

In my hometown of Winnipeg, I organize with Manitoba Energy Justice Coalition, a grassroots group committed to climate justice and Indigenous sovereignty. We plan rallies, protests, sit-ins and other actions in solidarity with Indigenous-led movements.

I also co-chair the Mennonite Coalition for Indigenous Solidarity, a provincial working group of Mennonites from a diversity of urban and rural congregations who are seeking to bring our constituency into the spiritual and practical work of Indigenous-settler relations.

My question: **Why is the work of reconciliation important to each of you?** ❧

MC Canada leadership approves updated operating agreement

Agreement affirms organization's separate identity and roles of executive leadership

Mennonite Church Canada

Mennonite Church Canada's Joint Council approved updates to the MC Canada operating agreement at its meeting on June 8.

"The latest revision of the operating agreement builds on our learning over the past four years so that we can better operationalize the priorities we share as a nationwide church," said Calvin Quan, MC Canada's moderator, who completed his term in July.

The "operating agreement between five regional churches in their collaboration as Mennonite Church Canada" is an amalgamation of governance principles and protocols for MC Canada and replaces the former operating agreement that was created after a special assembly in 2017, at which delegates voted to change the organizational structure of MC Canada.

The new five-page agreement was redrafted by a Joint Council subcommittee after consultation with Credence and Co., an industry leader in organizational health, which identified inefficiencies within MC Canada's organizational system.

Updates to the new agreement address the lack of autonomy given to MC Canada within the covenanted partnership of five regional churches in 2017 and the roles of the regional church executive ministers group (EMG, formerly the Executive Staff Group) in nationwide decision-making. It recognizes MC Canada as a legal entity with its own identity and clarifies the EMG as an advisory group for the executive minister, not as staff accomplishing tasks for the nationwide church.

Joint Council was reaffirmed as "the primary setting in which the regional churches collaborate and exercise governance of MC Canada," the agreement states.

"One of the most important things to have in any governance structure is clarity around identity, roles, authority and responsibilities," said Doug Klassen,

MC Canada's executive minister. "This new operating agreement not only simplifies the structure, but offers the necessary clarity to make it more efficient."

The new agreement will serve as a foundational document when MC Canada leadership updates related policies and renews its covenant with the regional churches every three years.

It was adopted as a working document on June 8. Joint Council will be reviewing pending changes to Section 12 of the operating agreement in October. Unlike the operating bylaws, the operating agreement does not require Mennonite Church Canada delegate approval.

Significant clauses

3. Theological identity of Mennonite Church Canada

MC Canada is a faith community rooted in the historic Anabaptist tradition, grounded in Scripture, with the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* serving as an interpretive guide for faith and life. Three core convictions animate MC Canada: Jesus is the centre of our faith, community is the centre of our lives, and reconciliation is the centre of our work.

5. Core principles

MC Canada is a legal entity and as such has its own formal identity.

MC Canada is the five regional churches working together as one. As such, the five regional churches and MC Canada are mutually interdependent.

The regional churches are accountable to each other through a covenant by which they commit to seeking the health of all regional churches and MC Canada as a whole system in their decision-making, both individually and collectively. All programming is thus ultimately programming of the larger system, whether initiated and administered by a regional church, or

collectively as MC Canada. They agree that policy, nationwide agenda, and priorities are to be established through collaborative work in and through the Joint Council. They agree that they will animate the agenda and priorities of the larger system through regular attention to them at regional church board meetings and at regional church delegate gatherings, e.g., by inviting the executive minister or other senior staff to board meetings, retreats, or other such settings.

MC Canada strives to be an intercultural church, with values of equity, diversity and inclusion at all levels, e.g., in the appointment of representatives to the Joint Council from the regional churches.

14. Communications

MC Canada (normally) speaks on behalf of the whole (regional churches and their congregations) as it relates to MC U.S.A., Mennonite World Conference, other global bodies, international agencies, the nationwide church and nationwide denominations.

MC Canada may at times develop and declare position statements. Such statements may be drafted by various parts of the organization (e.g., EMG), but if considered significant they should be processed by Joint Council

Regional churches speak on behalf of MC Canada, including the work of the Joint Council, its program and work, and the other regional churches in their communication with their member congregations.

Regional churches agree to develop and work within a shared communication strategy, with an eye to consistent unified branding across the system. ☞

The agreement is available to view or download at bit.ly/3xUc1gw.



'Under the tall, tall trees of Camp Valaqua'

Youth get an 'amplified' education on colonial/settler relations, worshipping God

By Joani Neufeld

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
WATER VALLEY, ALTA.



PHOTO BY DAN DRIEDGER

Gathering from across Canada, Mennonite youth, sponsors, volunteers and parents took part in Amplify! at Camp Valaqua.

From July 31 to Aug 4, 132 youth, sponsors, volunteers, parents and planning committee members from across Canada gathered under the tall, tall trees of Camp Valaqua to learn, worship and fellowship, at the Mennonite Church Canada youth gathering Amplify!

Joined by Christy Anderson, our guest speaker, we were challenged to “amplify” the voices of others, stretch our understanding on colonial/settler issues, and to worship God. In a few short days, friendships were made, adventures were taken, minds were blown open and a ton of fun was had.

Workshops were led by Zoë Chaytors and Allison Brooks-Starks of Emberwood (Edmonton); Ruth Boehm of Faith Mennonite Church, Leamington, Ont.; Jess Klassen of Winnipeg; Canadian Mennonite University; and Conrad Grebel University College.

Camp Valaqua activities included a

climbing wall; archery; and time in the river swimming, canoeing or kayaking.

Service projects were led by Linda Wiebe Dickinson of Mennonite Central Committee Alberta, and Jeff Schellenberg of Camp Valaqua.

The planning committee expresses our gratitude to everyone who came and took part in the event. We are ever grateful for the support we received—financially, emotionally and physically—from across the country. We are especially thankful for the time that Christy spent planning and leading our youth. Her wisdom will guide all of us forward.

At the final session, she shared the following list to help the youth continue working toward reconciliation, and it pertains to all of us:

- **Research** First Nations/Inuit/Métis peoples in your area to understand their history and contributions to history,

including the Doctrine of Discovery, Indian Act, 94 Calls to Action, 231 Calls for Justice into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls, and UNDRIP.

- **Watch movies** / read books by Indigenous authors and filmmakers, including *Reservation Dogs* (PG13), *The Marrow Thieves* by Cherie Dimaline and *Inconvenient Indian* by Thomas King.

- **Learn more** about Indigenous arts and artists.

- **Follow Indigenous** peoples on social media.

- **Attend local** Indigenous cultural events open to the public. If an Indigenous person invites you, just go.

- **Research and** do a presentation on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) for your school, work or church.

- **Learn the** land acknowledgment for your area and use it in your meetings and events.



PHOTO BY JOANI NEUFELDT

Left to right: Mackenzie Hildebrand, Louisa Adria and Danika Warkentin lead the group in times of worship.



PHOTO BY JOANI NEUFELDT

Guest speaker Christy Anderson challenges youth to work toward reconciliation.

- Visit a local Indigenous or friendship centre. Get involved and make relationships.
- **Participate in** Orange Shirt Day, Bear Witness Day, National Indigenous Peoples Day and National TRC Day.
- **Ask a** knowledge keeper/elder/Indigenous person to come to your school. Learn the local protocols, and make sure that you offer the appropriate compensation or gift.
- **Attend a** march or protest in your area.

Bring your parents.

- **Study an** Indigenous language. It is meaningful to learn culture in your local context.
- **Organize a** fundraising event for an Indigenous charity. Make sure that it is organized and led by Indigenous people.
- **Keep having** conversations, wrestling with convictions regarding ongoing settler/colonial relations. ☘



PHOTO BY MEL HARMIS

Youth assembled MCC school kits as a service project.



PHOTO BY JOANI NEUFELDT

Worship times happen under a large tent.

Three youths reflect on their experience at Amplify!

Ethan Willms

Foothills Mennonite Church, Calgary

A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to attend Amplify! at Camp Valaqua. This was an amazing experience for me, and it left me wanting more.

The first thing that made this week so enjoyable was the participants. Meeting all different kinds of people from different provinces was a refreshing experience! It was amazing finding out all the quirky little differences that the kids from each province had. This was especially evident, as well as fun, during worship and campfire times, as people from each province, and therefore each different camp, had slightly different versions of each song. It was also interesting finding out how each of the camps across the provinces ran their individual camps, and how they were different from ours.

I spent a lot of time playing ultimate frisbee, basketball, and meeting new

people. Ultimate Frisbee was a brand-new game that I learned during Amplify! and it was a blast! Our new friends from Ontario taught us how to play on the first day. It became a regular activity and my personal favourite, despite my ineptitude.

We also had a great time playing basketball with our new friends one province over. They helped us have a huge amount of fun, and we had a great time learning about our very flat neighbouring province.

My favourite part of Amplify! was meeting lots of new people, both campers and group leaders. We had phenomenal youth leaders attend the camp and it made it a whole lot of fun: from bribing groups in Monopoly, to the way the whole camp would start chants for various leaders throughout the week, specifically Jeff and Randy.

Becoming friends with people from all across the country was an amazing

experience, and I can only hope that I can stay in touch with them for a long time.

Kai Willms

Foothills Mennonite Church, Calgary

If I had to sum up my time at Amplify!, I would say it was amazing. It was good to meet so many new people and learn about all the other camps and congregations around Canada.

One of my favourite parts were the worship sessions. It was really cool to learn all the songs from the other camps. It was also really impactful to listen to Christy Anderson speak about her life experiences and about the Mennonite and Christian faith from a First Nations'



Ethan Willms and Kai Willms

PHOTO BY DEANNA WILLMS



Dinner in the dining hall.

PHOTO BY JOANI NEUFELDT



PHOTO BY JOANI NEUFELDT

Campers learn new songs and actions at Amplify!

perspective. She shared stories about how the residential schools have had a negative impact on her family and how those experiences will have an impact for many generations to come.

Another thing that I liked were the people, whether it be the Ontarians destroying us in Ultimate Frisbee or the Saskatchewanians being amazed by how many trees were around us.

Another neat thing was how we could see how other camps were different from ours but still had the same core values. We got to learn a bunch of songs that were from camps across the country. Some of the songs were familiar to me, but some of them I learned for the first time.

On the last night, we were told that there was a late-night surprise for us before we played Mission Impossible. The surprise was fireworks and, boy, did they not disappoint! They were amazing. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see them light up the sky in a dazzling display.

Another activity that we did was go on a hike. While we were on the bus ride to the hike in the Kananaskis, it was amazing to see a bunch of people who had never seen mountains (or at least the Rockies) see the sheer size of the Rockies. This really made me realize how fortunate I am to live right beside the most beautiful mountains in the world.

Overall, Amplify! has to be my favourite week at camp ever, and one of the best weeks of my life. I am so grateful to be able to be a part of it.

Lahna Giugovaz

Bergthal Mennonite Church, Didsbury, Alta.



PHOTO BY STEVEN GUIGOVAZ

Lahna Giugovaz

My experience at Amplify! at Camp Valaqua was nothing like I'd even felt before. This was my first time at any type of summer camp, and I don't think anything could have been better. At the beginning, I was scared, but it felt so safe, and I'd never felt more connected to the church in my life.

I made a friend almost immediately. We both had never been to an overnight camp before, so we decided early on to stick together, and we quickly became friends. We are still in contact, even with the distance.

Being there opened my eyes to the

future of our church. I had absolutely no idea how many youth there were in Mennonite Church Canada; it felt like I was actually a part of something bigger. I'd never felt that before, never. I got to talk to people and have good, fun conversations with many people. It was like a home away from home.

Seeing everyone at first was intimidating, but it took maybe an hour to get comfortable around them. The experience of just being at camp felt so perfect: the singing, the games, the people. I couldn't have asked for more.

I felt that I could be myself with everyone, even though I was one of the younger campers. I could talk to anyone. At first, I only talked to my friend from before, but we got split up when they went on the hike, and then at Calaway Park. So I had to talk to other people, and it went much better than my anxious mind had thought. I found a group to stick with, and we joked around and had a lot of fun. I even fell asleep on the bus.

Every night I would journal about the message presented to us. It meant so much to me—the way Christy Anderson spoke held such meaning, and I wanted to document the things that spoke to me. It even got me back into doing daily devotions at home. Her words really got to me. I want to learn more about the balance between the peacemaker and warrior spirit. It made me think. I wanted to listen, which doesn't happen very often.

The worship was astonishing. Getting to sing camp songs with everyone was such a magical experience because everyone joined in, and doing the actions was even expected. People were jumping around and having fun. In some other places, people think they're "too cool" to do all that, but the energy at Amplify! was so comfortable that everyone did it anyway.

I wouldn't change anything if I were to do it over. Camp was the best experience I'd ever had with the church, and I say this wholeheartedly. I felt accepted and loved. It felt like God was showing me all this, showing me the youth of our community and the possibilities of the church. ☸

The power of language

CMU student conducts survey on gendered language that can hurt and heal, divide and unite

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

How have you experienced gendered language? Has certain language hurt you or made you feel welcome and safe? These are some of the questions that students reflected on in a recent peer-led survey about Canadian Mennonite University (CMU).

Last semester, Jubilee Dueck Thiessen surveyed the CMU student body about experiences of gendered, binary and heteronormative language on campus. Dueck Thiessen is a CMU student from Winnipeg, in her final year of a bachelor of arts degree with focuses in English, philosophy and theology. She is also external vice-president on the student council for the second year in a row.

When a previous survey she conducted revealed that many students thought student council wasn't very useful, she was determined to do something valuable. One student's feedback requested discussions about gender and inclusion on campus, so she pursued it.

"My hopes were that all CMU students would feel safe and accounted for more fully in the future after these conversations," she says.

Through an online form advertised in CMU's daily announcements and social media, students responded anonymously to questions like:

- "What has your experience of gendered language been at CMU?"
- "What has your experience of inclusivity been like in CMU courses regarding syllabi, assigned authors and in-class conversations?"
- "What would you like to see changed in gendered language or in inclusive



Jubilee Dueck Thiessen



Anna Nekola

practices at CMU?"

Dueck Thiessen can't discuss the survey's results in detail because sharing them externally would require a vetting process by the ethics board. But as

someone who identifies as queer and has many friends in the LGBTQ+ community, she has participated in many of these conversations, and the survey confirms what she has already heard.

Male/female binary language and strictly gendered spaces on campus, like bathrooms, choirs and athletics, can be uncomfortable and stressful for some students. Even people who don't struggle with these challenges often want to explore the issue further for the sake of the people it does affect.

Her personal experiences shaped this initiative, too. She was surprised by how much she noticed her gender identity as a woman in academia. She felt frustrated that philosophy and theology could often feel like an exclusive boys' club, and that students read hardly any texts written by women, never mind gender-diverse and queer voices. So she wanted to see what others were experiencing.

After launching the survey, she collaborated with Anna Nekola, associate professor of music, and associate dean of teaching and learning, to host a forum on the topic. Nekola has taught a queer theory course at CMU, and her scholarly research examines issues of social power in music, like race, identity and representation.

"The purpose of the forum was to continue a collective dialogue and to cultivate a mutual understanding and a shared vision for what a safe and inclusive campus could and should look like," Dueck

Thiessen says.

They did this through video, discussion groups, lists of resources, and collectively creating a word map of the identities that were important to each person.

Both facilitators were amazed at the number of people who attended the forum "and the range of voices in the space, and some of the passion and heartfelt sharing that came from folks across the community," Nekola adds. "Some of the things that happened in the public forum seeded a lot of additional conversations afterwards, where people felt like they could come up to me and [share]."

Dueck Thiessen didn't want the survey and forum to produce an out-of-the-blue list of demands but rather create a social and relational process. Policies are important, but they won't change things if people aren't ready; one must shift the culture, too, she says.

"I have been hearing since I arrived at CMU that students are ready for change, and a change that is necessary for their existence to be seen as valid," Nekola says.

Some things at CMU have changed since the forum. The university has removed the words "women and men" from its mission statement, which now reads as ". . . CMU inspires and equips for lives of service, leadership and reconciliation in church and society."

Nekola led a workshop for faculty on classroom introductions, including discussions around pronoun usage and making students feel comfortable and welcome. More gender-neutral bathroom signage is in the works.

Dueck Thiessen hopes to do more with the survey results to initiate larger conversations on campus.

"I see this as living into our commitments of radical hospitality," Nekola says. "It's important to listen to others and listen to them tell us who they are, so that we can meet them in their full humanity. We would do that in so many other ways, along other lines of difference—race, ethnicity, religion—and this is just one more way that we can do it." ❧

The author is also a staff writer for CMU.

'There are no throwaway human beings'

Volunteers for The Micah Mission share their stories

Story by Emily Summach
Saskatchewan Correspondent

In some book I read, in the beginning of the book, it said, "There are no throwaway human beings.' That really stood out for me. To me, that meant that all human beings are keepers," says Constance Woloschuk. It was that spark of insight that led her to volunteering with The Micah Mission back in 2020.



**Constance
Woloschuk**

The Micah Mission is a volunteer-led, restorative-justice non-profit organization based in Saskatoon. Its mission is to transform the lives of incarcerated individuals, those who were formerly incarcerated and their families.

It does this by "being tough on crime, one friendship at a time." While The Micah Mission has many facets, its most notable volunteer-run programs are Person to Person, a penitentiary visitation program; and Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA), a support circle for recently paroled sexual offenders.

Harry Harder of Pleasant Point Mennonite Church, near Clavet, Sask., started volunteering with Person to Person more than 14 years ago.



Harry Harder

"I have always been interested in this kind of stuff," he says. "I took criminology in college, so it had been a theoretical interest for a long time. But it was about 14 years ago that I said to myself, 'I think I can volunteer with this now and see the real-life side of this.'"

For both Woloschuk and Harder, the decision to volunteer with The Micah Mission's programs has altered how they see the world.

"Well, generally speaking, what happens inside prison is behind walls, and most of us don't know what those people are like," says Harder. "And we're happy they're there because we're afraid of them. But their humanity doesn't end at those walls. They feel the same aspirations, problems and yearning to be connected that we all want. . . . Volunteering opened my eyes to another part of humanity that I haven't seen before. It's another window on a part of the world that I didn't know."

It is the human connections that Woloschuk has made through volunteering that have made the biggest impact

'Well, generally speaking, what happens inside prison is behind walls, and most of us don't know what those people are like. And we're happy they're there because we're afraid of them. But their humanity doesn't end at those walls.'

on her.

"Once, when I was driving, I heard this man, Brian Stevenson, being interviewed on CBC," she says. "He is a lawyer for people on death row in the southern U.S. He wrote a book called *Just Mercy*. . . and he said in the interview that, 'We are more than the worst thing we have ever done.' I was really moved by that, so I bought his book. And in the book he writes, 'There is no wholeness outside our reciprocal humanity.' And I thought, 'Oh my God! If I'm not hopeless, then neither are incarcerated people.' So, I got involved in The Micah Mission to visit someone who has no one to visit them. I knew this would be worthwhile. Because there are no throwaway human beings, they still need to belong, and to feel like human beings

so they don't reoffend. I feel that I know lots of really beautiful truths, but if I don't live them, what's the point?"

Harder encourages anyone who is interested in volunteering with The Micah Mission, or similar programs across Canada, to take the first step of filling out a volunteer application form.

"I think a lot of people want to do something meaningful and, if you come into this program, you see a part of the world you've never seen—racism, poverty, injustice—stare you right in the face," he says. "Not that you fix it, but you will be exposed and be involved. It's a very meaningful place to spend this retirement season of life.

"My feeling is that this is a place of consequence, important stuff, relating to people who don't have access to all the stuff you do. This is real life for some people, and we need to know that."

Woloschuk echoes the meaning she finds in volunteering: "Volunteering with Person to Person and CoSA, this is the most worthwhile thing I do. These two

things, for me, are the most worthwhile, important things I do right now in my life. . . . When I think of the recovered graves of the Indigenous children from residential schools, we hear that every child matters. If you follow those dominoes, every adult matters! Everyone matters! Every life matters! Incarcerated persons need to hear that. We all need to hear that. How are you going to matter?" ❧

For more information about volunteering with any of The Micah Mission's programs, or serving as a board member, visit themicahmission.org. For more information about volunteering at one of the 15 CoSA programs across Canada, visit cosacanada.com.



'We have no safe area under the sky'

In a nation famous for famine, Ethiopian Mennonites seek mutuality while facing drought

By Will Braun
Senior Writer

For much of my life I associated Ethiopia with famine. I'm just old enough to recall the searing scenes from Ethiopia in the mid-1980s: windswept, dull-beige landscapes; skeletal cattle; distended bellies; flies; people crowding trucks laden with sacks of food; and charitable rock concerts.

It was the most famous famine of modern times, made so in part by BBC journalist Michael Buerk's landmark report of the "biblical famine," which, in turn, inspired Irish rocker Bob Geldof to organize Live Aid, an international concert extravaganza watched by an estimated 40 percent of humanity.

Millions were raised, people were fed, Geldof was knighted, and Ethiopia became

the face of famine.

While I cannot erase those images from my mind, I now associate Ethiopia more with Meserete Kristos Church (MKC), the rapidly growing Anabaptist denomination in the country. As MKC president Desalegn Abebe notes, Ethiopia is home to a quarter of the Anabaptists in the world.

For perspective on the size and vibrance of MKC, Mennonite Church Canada executive minister Doug Klassen points out that the number of people baptized annually by MKC is greater than the total number of people in MC Canada. (At the time of writing, Klassen, and fellow Canadian Mennonites Norm Dyck and Fanosie Legesse were visiting Ethiopia for the MKC annual gathering.)

Ethiopia is clearly a place of spiritual wealth and vitality for Anabaptists.

But the country is also in the news again because of drought and hunger, in addition to ongoing civil violence.

"Red alert" reads the World Food Programme (WFP) website: "2022: A year of unprecedented hunger." The alarm sounded by the world's largest humanitarian organization is not related only to Ethiopia, but Ethiopia is one of the "hunger hotspots."

WFP reports that "50 million people in 45 countries are teetering on the edge of famine." In Ethiopia, more than seven million people require food assistance, according to a United Nations report in June referenced by Abebe. At that point,



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Displaced by conflict and trapped by drought, this woman seeks water in the Afar region in northern Ethiopia.



WFP/ANASTASIIA HONCHARUK, USED WITH PERMISSION

This UN-chartered ship left Ukraine on Aug. 16, carrying 23,000 tonnes of wheat bound for World Food Programme efforts in the Horn of Africa.

nearly 2.1 million livestock had perished, with another 22 million “very weak and emaciated,” and thus unable to provide the milk that is a main source of nutrition for children.

While northern and western parts of Ethiopia have been hardest hit by the civil violence—compounded by dry conditions—the worst drought is hitting the southern part of the country. Speaking by video call from Addis Ababa, Abebe says that eight MKC churches are in the area hardest hit by drought. They are semi-nomadic pastoralists, he says. Their livestock have died.

MKC sent a team there in August to provide training, encouragement and grain.

While Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) works with MKC and other partners in the areas affected by violence, MCC is not currently active in the southern drought region. It does, however, work in numerous other countries on WFP’s list of emergency areas.

All those emergencies are, of course, both eclipsed and exacerbated by the crisis in Ukraine. In addition to dominating headlines, the Russian offensive has restricted food supplies, and increased

food and fuel prices. Unprecedented need meets an unprecedented jump in the cost of meeting that need.

At the time of writing, a ship chartered by WFP was headed from Ukraine to the Horn of Africa with 23,000 tonnes of wheat.

One lesson of the famine in the 1980s was that the world needed to start caring before scenes of disaster appeared on their screens. That moment is now.

The high-profile global outpouring in the ’80s was too late for hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians. (Estimates vary on exactly how many hundreds of thousands.)

With reporters and experts drawing links between the ’80s and the present famine risk in Ethiopia, I asked Abebe the question on the top of my mind: What is it like to be from a country known for war and hunger? He responds: “You feel bad inside. . . . We, the people of Ethiopia, are sandwiched between drought and war. This is a desperate thing to see happening in your nation. . . . I have no words to explain how it feels to be a minister for people [in this situation].”

Abebe says the worst part is the compounded disasters of conflict, drought

and, most recently, flooding. “We have no safe area under the sky,” he says, explaining that there is no place to relocate people to. “It is heartbreaking. We have no option except praying to God to do something from nothing. . . . Our challenge is not bigger than God.”

He draws on the biblical story of Hagar. After Abraham sent her and their shared son Ishmael into the desert, her supply of water ran out and she gave up hope for the child. But an angel appeared, and with the angel water also materialized.

“That is my prayer,” says Abebe, “[for God] to refresh our dry land with blessings of rain from heaven.”

He also appeals directly to North Americans for assistance, noting past generosity with deep gratitude.

For him, drought not only causes suffering, but it hampers the work of the church. “Brothers and sisters who could play a great role in the ministry for the kingdom are dying because of lack of food,” he says. Supporting them will allow them to return to the work of “reaching unreached people.”

But he does not want us to see Ethiopia only as a recipient of aid. “Helping us doesn’t make you lord,” he says. “It doesn’t make you rich, doesn’t make you blessed.” Conversely, drought does not mean the people of Ethiopia are “cursed,” he says, noting climate change as a factor.

“This is a mutual thing,” Abebe says, “We are all created in the image of God.” While Ethiopia is currently lacking in some ways, he says the country and church have “many good things to share.”

Indeed, MKC will share much as host of the next global gathering of Mennonite World Conference in 2028. Abebe looks forward to providing opportunities for Mennonites from elsewhere to learn the story of MKC and how it has grown. He believes that, if people learn the history and culture of Ethiopia, they will not see it just in terms of poverty, drought and war. ❧

To contribute to relief efforts, visit mcccanada.ca or donate to Mennonite Church Canada or your regional church, with the designation: “MKC Emergency Relief.”



'Finding God in uncertain times'

Story and Photo by Jessica Evans
Alberta Correspondent
WATER VALLEY, ALTA

Edmonton First Mennonite Church has a long-standing tradition of holding its fall retreat every Labour Day long weekend at Camp Valaqua. For the first time in two years, members were once again able to come together and enjoy the beautiful surroundings and spend time in each other's company. While the church had held alternative activities in place of the retreat, this year's participants said it was wonderful to gather in person again. Thirty-two attended the event as well as an additional 25 on Zoom Sunday morning, Sept. 4.

"[Valaqua] is a place where so many people have memories," said Ev Buhr, the church's office administrator, "and it was very nice when we met and decided to meet in person once again"

The topic of this year's retreat was "Finding God in uncertain times." In

holding with the theme, the guest speaker declined, and it was proving difficult to find a cook for the weekend.

"Many of us can think of a time where we didn't have a job, we were in the midst of moving to a new city or finding a new church," Buhr said, "and all of those are times of uncertainty, and what are the things that ground us and help us find God, or how does God find us during those times?"

So a planning committee and volunteers within the congregation bound together and made the event happen. With resources from CommonWord, group building activities and talented members in the church, the event went off without a hitch. Except for a last-minute fire ban, which led a church member to offer up a propane fire pit, the weekend was enjoyed by all.

"Everything came together, I have always been an optimist," said Buhr. "It will work the way it was meant to work."

What sorts of uncertain times have you lived through? How did you find God during these times? Or did God find you? What advice would you give to someone who is experiencing uncertain times right now? If you are experiencing uncertain times, what do you need from God or from others? If you have come through uncertainty, what did you need from God or from others?

These questions were asked of participants prompting discussion around balance, creativity, compromise, working through disagreement, understanding and prayer.

"Prayer isn't changing God, it's changing us," said Donita Wiebe-Neufeld. "God provides reassurance that things will work out and we have to say that we are not in control."

There were suggestions for supports that might help, things like prayer, understanding, listening community connections and support systems. Participants realized that sometimes they don't see the hand of God until they come out the other side in a new place.

Are there new beatitudes that can be written? Thom M Shuman wrote *Beatitudes for These Days*, suggesting that people can claim the beatitudes for their own times. As a group activity, congregants wrote their own beatitudes, applying experiences during times of uncertainty:

- **"Blessed are** those who listen, for they shall inherit understanding."
- **"Blessed are** those who bring care packages, for they too shall receive care."
- **"Blessed are** those who speak up in love, especially when it's difficult, for they shall spark understanding."
- **"Blessed are** those who join on Zoom, for they shall hear God through others."
- **"Blessed are** the optimists, for they help us to see a better future."
- **"Blessed are** the pessimists, for they will help prevent disaster."
- **"Blessed are** the hopeful, for they will expose light in the darkness."

"There is a place for us to find some ways that we have been affected in the things we talked about, that we could write some new beatitudes," said Buhr. "Speaking up about times of struggle, how to embrace the uncertainty we are faced with while also being vulnerable."

As the participants enjoyed swimming and canoeing in the river, wall climbing, archery, campfire songs and being in nature, they reflected on the uncertain times in the past as well as in the future.

"We have experienced loss of people in our lives, restrictions, struggles in relationships" said Buhr. "We wondered how we had found God in these times, or perhaps how God found us." ❧



Donita Wiebe-Neufeld leads members of Edmonton First Mennonite Church on a mushroom tour at their fall retreat at Camp Valaqua near Water Valley, Alta., from Sept. 2 to 4.

'Standing at the crossroads'

Bridgefolk asks how to repair harm to Indigenous Peoples

By Gerald W. Schlabach
Bridgefolk
COLLEGEVILLE, MINN.

How to seek just peace through racial justice and Indigenous-settler encounters has been an ongoing theme in recent Bridgefolk conferences of Mennonites and Roman Catholics.

This year's theme, "Standing at the crossroads," proved particularly timely when the Vatican announced that Pope Francis would make an apology, just days after Bridgefolk's conference in late July, to the Métis, Inuit and First Nations peoples of Canada for the "deplorable" abuses they suffered in Canada's Catholic-run residential schools from the late 1800s until as late as 1990.

Although church collaboration with governments in running residential or boarding schools did not last as long in the U.S. as in Canada, churches south of the border—including Mennonite ones—also face the legacy of their own mission efforts.

Introducing these challenges, Sister

Pat Kennedy OSB, of Saint Benedict's Monastery, and Jaime Arsenault, tribal historic preservation officer for the White Earth Nation in northern Minnesota, shared the story of their communities' collaborative project to reckon with their history. The Sisters have officially apologized for their complicity in the boarding school program, but Kennedy and Arsenault both insisted that this can only be a beginning.

"My work on historical preservation for White Earth is future-oriented," noted Arsenault, while Kennedy underscored that her community must now work to build relationships of trust with the communities of White Earth and Red Lake. Sharing long-forgotten documents and photos from monastic archives offers one opportunity for healing to Indigenous descendants.

In the following session, Reverend Jim Bear Jacobs of the Stockbridge-Munsee



PHOTO BY GERALD W. SCHLABACH

Reverend Jim Bear Jacobs of the Stockbridge-Munsee Mohican Nation.

Mohican Nation stated bluntly: "For white congregations there is no pain-free path forward in this. Reconciliation will cost you something. It should cost you something because it cost me everything."

He called on every congregation in every denomination that was complicit in boarding schools "at the very least" to "commit a significant amount of your church budget to Indigenous language and cultural reclamation projects," not simply as charity but as something "you wrestle with at every quarterly business meeting," just like salary obligations and light bills.

Jacobs also called on congregations and parishes to assess the stories that their buildings tell through their iconography, flags, symbols, stained glass windows and, especially, their portrayals of Jesus. "Does he look like a good old-fashioned Swede? Or might I find a Jesus with brown skin?"

Jacobs' challenge was paired with a presentation by Jeremy Bergen of Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., in a session that asked, "How does a tradition repent?" With expertise on the theology of church apologies, Bergen noted that the stories of his Mennonite ancestors' flight as refugees from war and persecution in Europe have long blinded Mennonites to the realities and histories of the Indigenous Peoples on to whose ancestral lands they settled.

Perhaps the hardest task of repair for white settlers and their descendants is to actually return stolen land or the resources Indigenous communities need to recover land. "It may be unrealistic to return all the land," noted John Stoesz in a final session on the topic of repairing the legacy of harm to Indigenous Peoples, "but it is unjust to



PHOTO BY GERALD W. SCHLABACH

Muriel Bechtel, left, Jay Freel Landry, John Stoesz, Fr. William Skudlarek OSB, and Samantha Lioi are pictured at the Bridgefolk hymnsing.

return none.”

Repairing 500-year wrongs may seem daunting, but as an advocate for land recovery, Stoesz has practised what he preaches. When his family sold its farm near Mountain Lake, Minn., he turned over half of his share in the proceeds to the Makoce Ikikcupi organization, which seeks to reconnect Dakota people to the homeland from which they were expelled in Minnesota in the 19th century. His personal story and his elaboration of the work Makoce Ikikcupi is doing to return Dakota land, revitalize Dakota culture and renew the natural environment, underscored that the work of repair really is possible.

More than possible, the work of repair is joyful when it is grounded in deepening friendship, suggested various speakers. Speaking warmly of her relationships with the Sisters of St. Benedict, to whom she often brings wild rice or sunflowers, Arsenault told of her hope to return a hundred-plus-year-old pair of moccasins with a floral design to a family she knows in the White Earth community: “No matter how difficult things get, there will be moments like that peppered throughout this experience, I guarantee you. How interesting that I brought flowers to the Sisters to bring joy and that flowers might return to equally bring joy back.”

Whether “reconciliation” is the right word for this work was a question that some speakers at the conference took up because Indigenous Peoples see no time of right relationships between their ancestors and Europeans in the past to which they can return. When those who have benefited from past wrongs are willing to live with



PHOTO BY JOETTA SCHLABACH

Abbot John Klassen of St. John's Abbey takes part in a panel discussion with Bridgefolk founders Weldon Nisly, on screen, Gerald W. Schlabach, and Marlene Kropf about the history of Bridgefolk.

their discomfort, relinquish their need for control and do what they can to repair past wrongs in tangible ways, however, new and deeper relationship can bring healing for all. ❧

News brief

Edmonton CoSA to integrate with MCC Alberta

Edmonton Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) will join its resources with CoSA Calgary under the operations of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Alberta, expanding its ability to support former offenders to integrate with the community and lead responsible, productive lives. Edmonton CoSA has been guided by a small group of dedicated people through multiple partnerships with organizations and funders over the years, ultimately becoming independent in 2015. Ken Grahlman, MCC Alberta's CoSA coordinator, approached the Edmonton group in the fall of 2020, to build solidarity and share ideas for how to facilitate the program during the pandemic. Two years later, out of a desire to grow its resources and provide services to more people, Edmonton CoSA will join MCC Alberta in September, to be coordinated by Grahlman. Arthur Dyck, Edmonton CoSA's president, says of the integration: “Our commitment to CoSA is bigger than our society. [We] are not tied to a particular structure or ownership. . . . Our goal is to have a stable, well-funded program here in Edmonton.” “I want to honour their history and their commitment,” says Grahlman. “After our conversations, it became clear this was the best way forward for all of us. It will be nice for Edmonton CoSA to focus on doing the work without worrying about a lack of resources.”

—MCC ALBERTA



**Mennonite
Central
Committee**

News brief

MCC calls on PM to remove barriers to humanitarian assistance



Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada has joined other leading Canadian aid organizations to launch Aid for Afghanistan, a national campaign calling on the Government of Canada to immediately act to remove barriers that have blocked and deterred the provision of lifesaving humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan for the past year. The campaign encourages Canadians to take action by writing to their MPs. Because of restrictions in the Canadian Criminal Code and Canadian sanctions legislation, Canadian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been restricted in their ability to do humanitarian work in Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover in August 2021. “MCC is working within the restrictions of the Canadian Criminal Code; however, these restrictions limit our ability to fully support our local partners and to provide ongoing sustainable programming,” says Annie Loewen, MCC's humanitarian assistance coordinator. Along with other NGOs, such as Canadian Foodgrains Bank, World Vision and Presbyterian World Service & Development, MCC is calling on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to act now. “We've heard from many compassionate Canadians who want to respond to the situation in Afghanistan. We're calling on the government to remove barriers so the people of Afghanistan . . . can get the lifesaving support they need,” says Loewen. For more information, visit bit.ly/3T2AZnK.

—MCC CANADA

Vineland church goes 'cruising on Menno Street'

Story and Photo by Maria H. Klassen
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
VINELAND, ONT.

“Cruising on Menno Street” was the theme of an outdoor event staged by Vineland United Mennonite Church on Aug. 12.

Many restored and polished vintage cars were on display in the church parking lot. Cars were labelled with the name, year, special features and owner's name. Automobile owners answered visitors' questions and even gave a few rides.

Due to COVID-19, the church's Inter-generation Event Planning Team had not hosted a community event for a few years. People from the church and the community brought their lawn chairs and sat around in the church parking lot eating burgers, sweet corn and ice cream; visiting; checking out the cars; and enjoying each other's company. ❧



One of the vintage cars on display during Vineland United Mennonite Church's 'Cruising on Menno Street' event on Aug. 12, that also included a barbecue supper in the parking lot.

News brief

Seniors residence, floral shop strike a unique bargain

SASKATOON—It is often said that one man's trash is another man's treasure. This adage has proved true for one creative partnership in Saskatoon. Angela Schmiemann, the quality-of-life coordinator at Bethany Manor, a seniors-living complex in Saskatoon, says she noticed lots of flowers were being delivered or brought in by visiting family members, “and I noticed that many of the residents had piles of empty vases just sitting in their suites. And I thought, why not try to turn that into more flowers?” Schmiemann contacted a local florist's shop to see if it wanted to reuse those vases and, if in exchange, they might bring some flowers to Bethany Manor from time to time. The florist agreed. Schmiemann thought the Manor might get the occasional bouquet or two, but she says, “They filled my car with buckets of flowers! It's such a joy. We're able to put flowers in all the common areas, and the residents just love it.”

—BY EMILY SUMMACH



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANGELA SCHMIEMANN

Angela Schmiemann joyfully poses in front of a delivery of fresh flowers to Bethany Manor.

News brief

Foothills Mennonite Guest House closes after 15 years



PHOTO BY RUTH BERGEN BRAUN

Foothills Mennonite Guest House in Calgary closed on June 30.

CALGARY—Foothills Mennonite Guest House began 15 years ago, when members of Foothills Mennonite Church noticed that families and individuals from out of town would sacrifice their savings to pay for a hotel while visiting their loved ones in Calgary's hospitals. Often referred to by pastors, social workers or Alberta Health Services, guests would stay for one night or even several weeks. The church, through its guest house committee, provided volunteers to act as hosts, cleaners, painters, and they also helped with yard work and even baking. But after 15 years of successful ministry, the church met and decided that proceeds of the sale of the property would allow it the flexibility for future ministries, and the guest house closed on June 30.

—BY JESSICA EVANS

Gifts to the church

Believers Church Bible Commentary series nears completion

Story and Photo by Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

After almost 40 years of writing and editing, the Believers Church Bible Commentary (BCBC) series is nearing completion.

The collection of commentaries covers every book of the Bible, written by various biblical scholars across North America. Herald Press has published 35 volumes since 1986, and almost all of its final nine are currently in progress.

“It reflects the Anabaptist perspective that the Bible matters for Christian life today. So, writing a commentary is not just an academic exercise . . . but it’s supposed to be a gift to the church and something that informs Christian life and practice,” says Dan Epp-Tiessen. The former professor and pastor wrote the series’ most recent release, available in August, covering the biblical books of Joel, Obadiah and Micah.

Sheila Klassen-Wiebe, associate

professor of New Testament at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg, is currently writing the commentary on James. “A commentary opens up and unpacks the scripture passage. Its purpose is to help readers understand the text, to interpret what is being said, so people who preach on and study the Bible can understand it better,” she says.

Although published in the United States, the series counts a significant number of Canadians as authors. More than 10 others, in addition to Epp-Tiessen and Klassen-Wiebe, have written commentaries, ranging from Exodus all the way to Philippians.

The Believers Church Bible Commentaries are solidly academic, but they are still accessible to all, rather than some commentary series that are designed primarily for people who have spent years

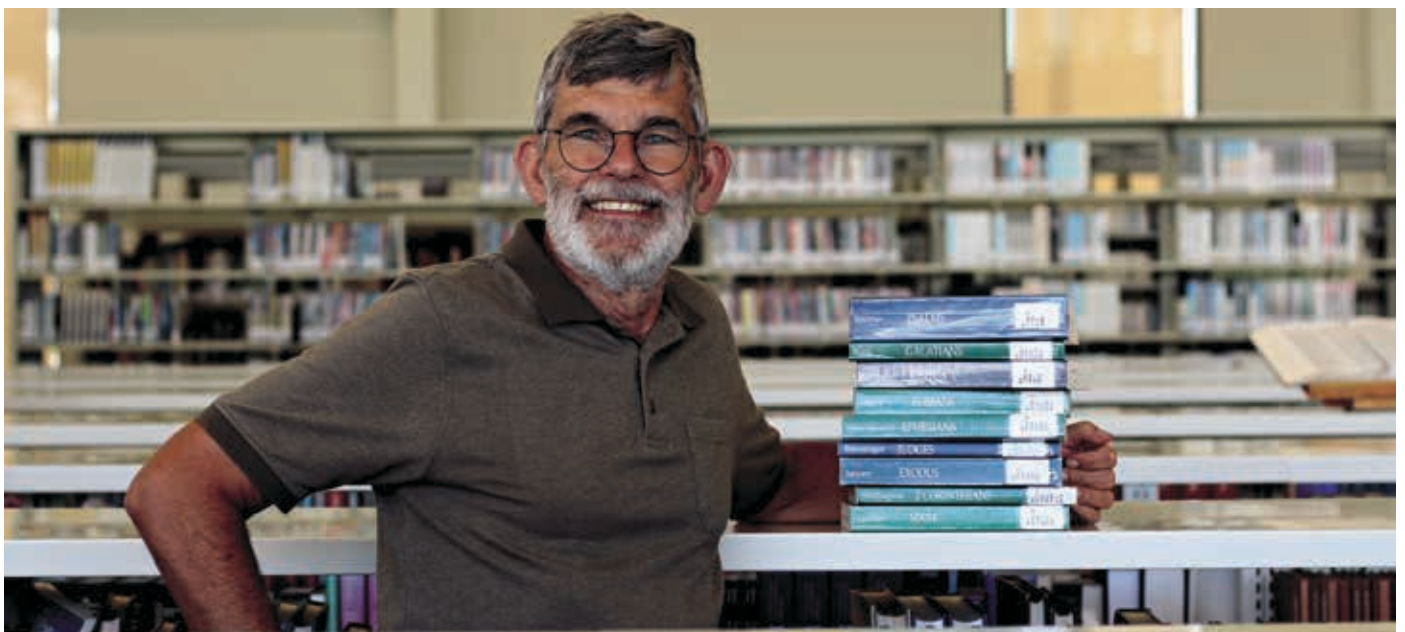
in academia. CMU students writing essays in biblical and theological studies courses quickly learn to make a beeline for the library section with the Believers Church commentaries.

Each portion of scripture in the commentaries is discussed in three sections: analysis of the scripture and how that text fits into the biblical context and the life of the church.

Biblical texts don’t stand alone but rather participate in the larger biblical drama. Context is vital to understanding scripture, and commentaries help people learn that. For example, Obadiah condemns the Edomites who persecuted Israel in the Babylonian exile. Yet Epp-Tiessen found that reading the book in its biblical context revealed that Israel previously subjected Edom to 400 years of colonialism and oppression.

The book comes from a time when Israel had been brutally traumatized by Babylon; these texts helped that community survive. But reading the Bible in a different time means we can’t understand it the same way.

“How do we hear these texts today, given that it’s such a different context?” Epp-Tiessen says. “That needs to be front and centre in terms of how we appropriate and interpret these texts.”



Dan Epp-Tiessen wrote the most recent volume of the Believers Church Bible Commentary series on Joel, Obadiah and Micah, which will launch in October with an event at the CommonWord Bookstore and Resource Centre in Winnipeg.

Gordon Matties, chair of the editorial council and author of the Joshua commentary, says, “The BCBC series is the first commentary series in the Believers Church tradition, which includes Anabaptists and Brethren churches. Menno Simons and other 16th-century Anabaptists quoted and interpreted the Bible, but none wrote extensive commentaries on biblical books.”

This means the writers are examining scripture through an Anabaptist theological perspective, with a commitment to peace and community. It isn’t always obvious, but it’s always present. When Epp-Tiessen wrote about the Book of Obadiah, he had to address that God’s salvation comes through the annihilation of Israel’s enemies. While other commentators might ignore this, Epp-Tiessen says, “I refuse to not deal with those kinds of issues.”

The Anabaptist position since the 16th century has been that we see the fullest revelation of God in Jesus, he says. “So, we read all of the Bible in light of Jesus . . . that Anabaptist perspective gave me the courage and confidence to say, ‘I’m going to read Joel and Obadiah and Micah in light of Jesus, and not shy away from the problematic features of these books.’”

Klassen-Wiebe says writing with an Anabaptist perspective is like viewing scripture through a certain lens rather than trying to force it into a mould. “Reading it from an Anabaptist perspective doesn’t mean trying to make the text say something that it doesn’t say, but it’s like putting on a pair of glasses,” she says.

She says that being a woman and a feminist are also lenses she brings to the text. In her commentary on James, she writes a section on the imagery of birth and God as mother. While men may notice this too, it contains a different level of meaning for her, a mother who has given birth.

Klassen-Wiebe is the first Canadian woman to write a commentary for the BCBC series and is part of the small percentage of the series’ female authors. The titles published so far have been authored by 36 writers and only two of these have been women.

Matties says the editorial council was aware of the need for gender balance

since the beginning and acknowledges it didn’t achieve it. The council searched for women to write for the series but struggled to find many. He says the council prioritizes specialized biblical expertise over any other author criteria, and there are few female biblical scholars in the peace church tradition. However, six of the authors secured to write the remaining nine volumes are women.

The editorial process for each commentary is a thorough one. The manuscript is reviewed by the editorial council, a team of scholars from six different denominations in the peace church tradition, with around 40 years of experience in biblical studies. Two lay readers, an assigned editor and a copy editor also work on it.

“In the Anabaptist tradition there’s been an emphasis on community hermeneutics, that it’s not just the hierarchy that interprets the Bible and tells the rest of us what to think about it,” Epp-Tiessen says. “The

very editing process has that community hermeneutic built into it.”

The BCBC series is still directly engaging Canadian Mennonite pastors, and not only as a dependable resource. For the 2021 edition of ReNew, CMU’s annual conference on resourcing church leaders for ministry, BCBC authors led sessions on preaching from the books of the Bible on which they had commented, specifically in the Canadian Mennonite church context.

“We hope these commentaries will spark more conversation about the Bible in the life of the church,” Matties says. “This commentary series should be in every church library, not just in the pastor’s library.” ❧

Editor’s note, in the interest of full disclosure: Sheila Klassen-Wiebe is the mother of the author of this article.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BELINDA LUXTON / TEXT BY JANETTE THIESSEN

Former church administrators in Mennonite Church B. C. meet for a reunion. Pictured, from left to right: Grace EunHye, Sherbrooke Mennonite, Vancouver, with son Yodan; and Lottie Epp, Peace Mennonite, Richmond; Janette Thiessen, current MC B.C. office administrator; and former church administrators Belinda Luxton, Peace Church on 52nd, Vancouver; and Cheryl Dyck, Cedar Valley Mennonite, Mission, who met in Yarrow, B.C., on Aug. 14, for a time of reconnecting and continuing friendships. Throughout Thiessen’s 20-plus years in her role, she has seen many church administrators come and go. Presently there are 16 active church administrators and 64 alumni, many of whom expressed a desire to attend the reunion, but prior summer plans prevented them from doing so.

PEOPLE

'And that's when it happened!'

Paul Phomsouvanh wakes from 40-day coma after being admitted to hospital with COVID-19 and prayed for constantly

By Will Loewen
Trinity Mennonite Church
CALGARY

I was caught off guard when I got the call that my friend Paul Phomsouvanh was in the hospital with COVID-19 last fall. At that time, the new more contagious Delta variant had recently arrived. Cases were on the increase, so I shouldn't have been surprised.

I had seen Paul bounce back quickly from serious workplace injuries in the past, so he didn't seem to be more susceptible than anyone else. I would also find out later that Paul was a heavy smoker as a younger man, and people with weakened lungs were especially vulnerable to the virus.

But mostly, I was surprised because, to that point, our work as a congregation was more about responding to the lockdown than to the coronavirus.

When I asked how serious it was, I was only told that Paul had driven himself to the South Health Campus in Calgary on Nov. 10, unsure if what he was feeling was, in fact, COVID-19. The hospital quickly decided it was, and that he should be admitted.

It didn't sound very serious, but I knew from the news that hospital beds were in short supply, so the hospital's admitting him was a recognition that he needed more than he could administer to himself at home. I also knew that hospital rules at that time meant that I couldn't visit him, so I said that I would pray for him. I sent out the news to the whole congregation, inviting everyone to pray for him.

We waited for the updates, expecting that he would get the regular mix of medications and treatments, and that he would be returned to us in a week, but that update didn't come. Instead, we heard that



PHOTO BY WILL LOEWEN

Paul and Vila Phomsouvanh are pictured at their home in late August.

he wasn't responding to the treatments the way medical staff hoped, so they were trying new and different antibiotics. The longer he stayed, the more the reality set in that this was quite serious, and that Paul's future was in doubt.

What we didn't hear would have unsettled us even more. When Paul was admitted, he quickly texted his wife to say that he needed to stay at the hospital. He said he loved her and asked her to pray for him. Within hours, he was in an induced coma with a mechanical respirator set up to cover for his failing lungs, and various new medications flowing through his veins. He was given medication to fight the infections in his body that resulted from the COVID-19 infection. Those antibiotics succeeded at fighting off one infection, but when a new one came, Paul's body became resistant to the old antibiotic, and this became a repeating pattern.

At first, only his wife Vila was able to

visit him. She would try talking to him, praying over him and reading scripture for him. When I and others were finally able to visit him, we would cover ourselves in protective gear, and we would also talk, pray and read scripture.

Paul had spent some time as a deacon in our congregation. He was a leader among the local Laotian-Thai Christian community. He had also recently started giving leadership to an online Laotian Bible study that had people joining from around the world. He had spent time in Canada, Thailand and Laos preaching the gospel, mentoring leaders and supporting churches. On top of that, he gave support to a long list of neighbours, business partners and friends. So, it wasn't

a stretch to say that people were praying for Paul all over the city and all around the world.

That pattern of medicine working, failing and then being replaced by something new repeated until the hospital ran out of antibiotics to administer. The doctors called his wife in for a conversation. As the pastor, I was invited to join as well.

One doctor explained that they were out of treatment options. Not only had they run out of ways to fight off infections, but the ventilator was doing all the breathing for him. Paul had been in the hospital for almost a month and had made almost no progress.

His lungs were no longer infected, but they had started to harden from not being used. The best-case scenario was that, even if he managed to avoid further infections, he would never breathe again without the help of a machine. Was this the quality of life we wanted for Paul? Vila responded by

saying that she understood the bad news, but she still felt that she was not ready to interrupt his care.

A second doctor explained that he knew that Paul and Vila were people of profound faith. He explained that he was a Christian too. He had done missions and charity work in different parts of the world, and he had seen God's miraculous power at work. So, he invited us to join him, stand around Paul's hospital bed, and pray for a miracle.

He said we needed to pray hard, push every doubt from our minds and implore God to intervene. So, we did. I don't know about everyone else, but I had doubts, many of them. But I pushed them aside and trusted that God could provide a miracle.

A week went by. There was no progress, and so we were called in for another difficult conversation. There were no new infections, but one was inevitable. There was no medical reason for hope, so the doctors argued it would be better for them to remove support with his loved ones in the room rather than for him to slip away alone in the night.

The same doctor who prayed with us explained that the doctors and nurses around him drew encouragement and hope from watching people recover, and since it

seemed no miracle was coming, maybe it was time to give Paul's ICU bed to someone whose chance of survival was better. Still, Vila prayerfully decided that it didn't feel to her that this was God's timing.

Throughout all of this, people were praying. When possible, local friends and family would drop in to visit. Others joined by internet video calls. After another week, there were still no changes, good or bad, so it was decided that Paul could be moved to another wing of the hospital to wait out the inevitable.

And that's when it happened! On Dec. 20, with only basic care, Paul's body started to respond. His heart rate increased, and his lungs started working. Very slowly at first, so slowly that everyone was cautious not to read too much into it, but he was improving. After a week, he was moved to a physiotherapy/rehab centre, and he came home after a three-week stay there.

Paul was in a coma for 40 days and nights. The last thing he remembered was being admitted to the hospital, and then nothing until he heard a voice from God. The voice said, "Paul, I need you to build my church. I need you to bring my message to the Lao people." Then, Paul opened his eyes. It would be a week before his throat

was strong enough to speak. It would be a month before his muscles could be rehabilitated, and he could walk on his own. But Paul was back.

He said he didn't remember the visits, the readings, the stories and the prayers, but he knew that he had received a miracle. He only has gratitude for the doctors and nurses who cared for him. He was humbled by the support of the church, locally and globally, who prayed for him. Already, he is taking every chance he gets to tell people his story, and when he gets his strength fully back, the work will continue.

When Paul fell ill, we all prayed. We prayed, of course, that a husband would be restored to his wife. We prayed for our friend, neighbour, teacher and business partner to be restored to us. But right alongside those personal prayers, we asked that whatever happened, that the work he started, the work that he and Vila were so passionate about, would continue. All of this is an answer to prayer.

Paul and Vila also asked to share that they are grateful for the prayer and well-wishes he has received from supporters at Trinity Mennonite Church, Mennonite Church Alberta, and MC Canada Witness. ☿

Couple celebrates anniversary by serving with MDS

Mennonite Disaster Service
MONTE LAKE, B.C.

For their 51st wedding anniversary, Grant and Joan Kowalenko wanted to go somewhere with great food, meaningful activities, engaging people, interesting scenery and good accommodations.

That's why they chose to do a week of service with Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) in Monte Lake, B.C. The Kowalenkos of Chilliwack B.C. spent the second week of August in Monte Lake, helping rebuild homes for wildfire survivors.

The couple, parents of two children and grandparents of five grandchildren, have done service with MDS before; it's the

seventh time for Grant, 76, and the fifth time for Joan, 78.

"We always meet so many interesting people on MDS projects," said Grant, who worked for Agriculture Canada. "It was great to be around so many young people," added Joan, a retired teacher, of the other younger volunteers at the project site.

As for spending their anniversary with MDS in Monte Lake, "It was like being at an all-inclusive resort," joked Grant. "We had all-you-can-eat meals, a full schedule of daily activities, time in the sun and we got to meet people from across Canada." ☿



MDS PHOTO BY JOHN LONGHURST

Grant and Joan Kowalenko celebrated their 51st anniversary while serving with Mennonite Disaster Service in Monte Lake, B.C., recently.

It's a 'God thing'

Friends join to sponsor Ukrainian newcomers to Canada

By Barry Bergen

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
LEAMINGTON, ONT.

It is amazing what can happen when a few friends get together.

Roger and Laura Tiessen, members of Faith Mennonite Church in Leamington, were touched by events in Ukraine that were unfolding in February and March of this year. They voiced their concerns with friends Brad and Charlotte Lane. Before long, Brad and Roger, their golfing buddies and their wives were all on board to sponsor a displaced family from Ukraine to come to Canada.

Soon they called upon the assistance of Faith Mennonite, since an established

charity is most credible when receiving donations. The church was on board right away and, together with others from the community, this small group's number expanded to around 40.

This diverse group, ranging from regular church attenders to those who do not follow a specific religion, all had similar sentiments about their own fortunate situation and the senseless misfortune of those fleeing for their lives in Ukraine. They also felt a desire to help by giving a family a hand up so they can help themselves.

Good intentions and a willing spirit are one thing, but how does one go about actually bringing a family from a war-torn nation here?

Ukrainians who are coming to Canada are not technically arriving as refugees. They are arriving under the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel program. To become eligible, Ukrainians needed to fill out an application and complete biometrics. Once approved, many families set up a profile on a special Canadian Facebook page in hopes that someone would offer assistance.

Initial arrangements the group had made to bring an identified family to the Leamington area fell through, so they were soon searching for another family to assist.

Charlotte Lane quarterbacked the search process using the Canada—Host Ukrainians Facebook page to identify and vet potential families for a fit with what the group from Leamington was offering. Criteria included a small family that wanted to live in a town, not a big city, and had a mechanic looking for work.

Before long Charlotte linked with the Kulachko family. Father Artem, mother Nadiia, and their 13-year-old son, Oleg, began communicating with Charlotte. With a virtual handshake over a video conference, they committed themselves to each other. The Kulachkos continued a long and arduous journey north, eventually arriving in Warsaw, Poland, where they boarded a 10-hour flight to Toronto.

The group had decided quite early on that they wanted to not just bring a family here, but to set them up for success after they arrived. This diverse group of people included a member who had a home that could be rented out, and whose business also needed a mechanic.

The house was prepared for the family, and donations and gifts-in-kind began flowing in. Before long, they had secured beds, bedding, bicycles, a lawn mower, every kind of kitchen utensil, sofas, chairs, a kitchen table and chairs, a car, and even a new faucet for the kitchen sink. The home was renovated, while Aeroplan points were donated toward the family's flight to Canada. The outpouring of generosity was a "God thing," according to members of the hosting group.

After flying for 10 hours from Warsaw, the Kulachko family met Brad and Charlotte at Pearson International Airport and climbed into their car for the four-hour drive to Leamington. They arrived with three suitcases and their dog Lizzie. The timeline from their first discussions on video chat to when the Kulachkos arrived



PHOTO BY CHARLOTTE LANE

Pictured from left to right: Artem, Oleg and Nadiia Kulachko at Pearson International Airport in Toronto after their arrival from Poland.



was about two-and-a-half months.

Within 12 days the group had a meet-and-greet at the Tiessens' home, and Artem was already working.

The group has since sponsored a second family: Father Daniil Dolozin; mother Olga Nesterenko; their daughter Violetta, 6; and son Timofey, 4. Olga's mother Nataliia Nesterenko also accompanied them. The Dolozin family, like the Kulachkos, were set up in Leamington to succeed, with a home to rent and suitable employment in place.

PHOTO BY CHARLOTTE LANE

(left) Pictured from left to right: Daniil Dolozin, Olga Nesterenko, Violetta, Nataliia and Timofey Dolozin in front of their new residence in Leamington, Ont.

Members of the sponsoring group have been kept busy with the daily requirements of settling newcomer families in Canada. Arranging for doctors, dentists, health cards (the newcomers are covered under OHIP), driver's licences, getting children enrolled in school, and making arrangements for English classes, are just some of the activities keeping them busy.

Both Ukrainian families asked their sponsors why they were doing this for them. Their response was, "The team wants to help you get established in Canada."

Unaccustomed to this kind of generosity, Olga commented, "Canada changes people." ❧



PHOTO BY BARRY BERGEN

The Essex-Kent Mennonite Historical Society in Leamington, Ont., sponsored a fundraising concert entitled 'Letters from the past' on Aug. 26. The program featured choral music written and directed by Elaine Penner, interspersed with the reading of letters from Penner's family members who did not emigrate to Canada but stayed in Ukraine and subsequently endured the atrocities of life there under Stalin. The letters spanned the late 1920s to the mid-30s. Olga Nesterenko, inset, arrived in Leamington, Ont., from Ukraine in mid-July and played the prelude to the concert. The event raised more than \$13,000 for the Friends of the Mennonite Centre in Ukraine.



Growing old with grace and gratitude

Seniors have 'deep longing for connection,' says retired chaplain

By Amy Rinner Waddell

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Ingrid Schultz, who recently retired as one of three chaplains at Menno Place in Abbotsford, will never forget the succinct advice one of her instructors told her during chaplaincy training: “Shut your mouth and open your heart.”

As she begins her own retirement, Schultz is reflecting on her time opening her heart in ministry to the spiritual needs of the residents of Menno Place, B.C.’s largest seniors care facility, with 750 residents. She began work at Menno Place 10 years ago, following a term as pastor of Vancouver’s First United Mennonite Church (now Peace Church on 52nd), and clinical pastoral education training at Vancouver General Hospital. She joined Emmanuel Mennonite Church upon her move to Abbotsford.

Schultz’s chaplaincy duties included making regular spiritual assessments of residents and charting them, having devotions with staff, planning and leading chapel services, training palliative care volunteers, and ministering to families after the death of loved ones. But her most rewarding activity was visiting one-on-one with the residents. She worked primarily in the Menno Home section, where about 80 percent of the residents had dementia.

Schultz believes that, despite cognitive impairment and memory loss, those in their final years still have much to offer. She suggests this is when the church can also have “dementia” regarding those elders, when potential visitors assume that someone with memory loss doesn’t know or care if anyone visits.

“As our cognitive ability diminishes, our longing for connection with God and others expands,” she says. “But exactly when that starts happening, people stop visiting. People with dementia have this deep longing for connection. We need to remind them of their area of greatness.

It’s a moving from the head, which isn’t functioning very well anymore, to the heart, which is at the centre of how we relate to God and to others.”

One example she cites was a woman who had her eyes closed during an entire communion service, but at the end suddenly opened them and said, “Jesus is here.”

“She was able to experience Jesus in a way that those of us who are in head more than heart couldn’t,” Schultz says.

Schultz saw gifts being used frequently among the residents of Menno, such as at chapel services, where those of different denominations worshipped together and appreciated each other’s traditions. “We never stop contributing,” she says. “Some people could play piano, others were wonderful scripture readers or pray-ers. I asked one wonderful resident, who is 105, ‘What is our purpose?’ and he said, ‘To bring beauty into the world. I see people doing that.’”

The COVID-19 pandemic presented a challenge for staff, when contact with residents was severely limited and particularly difficult when someone was dying.

She says she wasn’t allowed into the units. “I couldn’t be with people in their final hours, but I heard staff would do what chaplains [normally] did. COVID-19 has taught us more than ever that all of us need to be a community, and we need to know that we’re connected with others.”

Spending time with the elderly, Schultz says, has lessened her own fear of aging. She has found inspiration in observing elders accept the difficulties of their stage



PHOTO COURTESY OF INGRID SCHULTZ

Staff of Menno Place bade farewell to Ingrid Schultz, right, along with fellow chaplain Ingrid Stahl, who both retired at the same time over the summer.

of life with grace, from going to a life of doing to just being and being loved. The phrase that one woman shared was, “Acceptance brings peace.”

As of yet, Schultz hasn’t had much time to miss her work at Menno Place, as she and a friend are currently embarking on a two-month road trip across Canada. She describes retirement as first being go-go years, then slow-go years, then no-go years, and right now she is enjoying the “go-go years.”

“There are so many things we can learn from elders,” Schultz concludes. “I hope I’ve learned the lessons, but I won’t know until I am there. Seeing residents minister using their gifts, seeing residents accepting with gratitude their diminished memory and being grateful in the midst of that—that’s what I want to remember when my time comes to go into care.”

She feels confident that her replacement at Menno Place will continue to care for the residents with love and compassion. ❧

Will Braun appointed as CM's new executive editor

'Canadian Mennonite magazine must evolve. I love that challenge,' Braun says

Will Braun will be *Canadian Mennonite's* next executive editor.

Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service Inc. hired Braun, who has spent the last decade as *CM's* senior writer, to lead its magazine and digital news services, beginning on Nov. 1. Braun succeeds Virginia A. Hostetler, who is retiring after five-and-a-half years in the role.

Since joining *CM* in 2012, Braun has provided thorough and thoughtful coverage on a variety of topics, including the climate crisis, Indigenous-settler reconciliation, intellectual disability and contemplative spirituality. He reported on the "ghost rapes" of Bolivia that inspired the 2018 Miriam Toews novel, *Women Talking*, and he has written extensively about the challenges faced by Mennonites in other parts of the world, including Colombia, Myanmar and Ethiopia.

CM publisher Tobi Thiessen is happy that Braun will be building on that work as the magazine's executive editor.

"Will asks tough questions and pursues journalism that is important to our faith community, while making space for people with widely divergent views," Thiessen says. "*Canadian Mennonite's* mission is to foster dialogue on issues facing Mennonites in Canada. In an era of polarization, he will ensure this magazine continues to be a forum for dialogue."

Prior to joining *CM*, Braun was the co-founder, co-editor and co-publisher of *Geez* magazine, a quarterly, ad-free, print magazine about social justice, art and activism for people at the fringes of faith in Canada and the United States. During his five years with the magazine, *Geez* won numerous awards and was featured in *Maclean's*, the *Dallas Morning News*,



the *Toronto Star* and CBC.

He has written for a variety of publications, including *The Globe and Mail*, the *United Church Observer* and more than 30 op-eds for the *Winnipeg Free Press*. His work has twice earned him the A.C. Forrest Memorial Award,

the highest individual honour given by the Canadian Church Press (now the Canadian Christian Communicators Association).

Born and raised in southern Manitoba, Braun holds a degree from Menno Simons College at the University of Winnipeg, with majors in international development and conflict-resolution studies. He has served with Mennonite Central Committee in Brazil and throughout Canada.

In addition to his journalism, Braun has worked extensively with a number of First Nations, most often related to the impacts of hydro dams.

He lives near Morden, Man., with his partner, Jennifer deGroot, and their two sons, Zavi and Matoli. The family runs Big Oak Farm, a small farm that includes sheep, laying hens, bees and gardens. For the past decade they have attended Pembina Mennonite Fellowship, a house church that belongs to Mennonite Church Canada.

Braun says he is looking forward to moving into the executive editor role. He views the magazine as less a pulpit and more a foyer bustling with spirited discussion.

"The church must evolve. Print media must evolve," he says. "*Canadian Mennonite* magazine must evolve. I love that challenge. Some people may worry that I will turn *Canadian Mennonite* into a social justice magazine. To them I say: Send me story ideas. Help me alleviate your concerns."

"The magazine must reflect the rich

News brief

A back-to-school blessing



PHOTO BY HELENA BALL

Pastor Suzanne Gross of Holyrood Mennonite Church in Edmonton is pictured with students returning to school this fall. The students are Tarnisha Snogba, Ronky Snogba, Blessing Snogba, Nelsyne Chokpelleh, Cephas Chokpelleh, Josh Chokpelleh; Nathan Bumbeh, Edward Bumbeh and Grace Bumbeh.

Suzanne Gross began her term as interim pastor at Holyrood Mennonite Church in Edmonton, on Aug. 28. As part of the celebration, and in recognition of the return to school, the church had a blessing for the students. Gross made a card for each student with *fraktur* art (a German style of black-letter type) and two verses from a Christopher Dock hymn. "Christopher was an 18th-century Mennonite school teacher whose reward strategies, rather than punitive strategies, were widely known, thanks to the pedagogy that was published," explained Gross. "His rewards were little pieces of *fraktur*." Holyrood Mennonite has recently hired two part-time interim pastors, including Gross, and Joon Park, who will begin in October. Their job is to guide the congregation as it explores its future as an intentionally intercultural congregation.

—BY JESSICA EVANS

range of passions within the readership," he says. "Our task is to make the tensions within the readership creative tensions, to plumb the spiritual depths of our unity in Christ." ❧

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News brief

Biking and hiking raise funds for Alberta organizations

This summer, Alberta supporters of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and Camp Valaqua got physical to raise funds.

MCC Alberta

The group that calls itself Wheels of Waterton grew out of Ernie Engbrecht, Ron Esau and Dave Neufeldt's love for cycling and support for MCC. In 2020, COVID-19 put a stop to the annual relief sales, so MCC encouraged people to organize a GO!100 event to raise support among their peers for MCC projects locally and around the world by doing 100 of their favourite summer activities.

The trio decided to cycle 100 kilometres and found a route that took them from Cardston to Waterton National Park. In 2020, they set a goal of \$5,000.

With an additional cyclist, Doug Wiebe, in 2021, the group set a goal of \$10,000. They missed their goal by one dollar.

On July 15, 2022, the Wheels of Waterton III group grew to include Zachary Wirzba, Edgar Dueck and Ken Esau. Supporting families and MCC Alberta staffers Alex Heidebrecht and Robin Grimstead met them in Waterton for lunch. By July 18, they had exceeded their goal of \$10,000.

Camp Valqua

Camp Valaqua's annual Hike-a-thon has been generating funds for the camp for 20 years. At this year's event, hikers walked a total of eight kilometres on the north end of Jumpingpound Ridge, with a few making the summit of Jumpingpound Mountain at 14 kilometres. The fundraiser also had hikers participating remotely in Edmonton and other parts of southern Alberta. The event, which took place on June 11, has raised more than \$7,000 so far with more donations continuing to come in. The funds will go towards the camp's general fund.

—JESSICA EVANS

News brief

Westgate appoints new principal and vice-principal



PHOTO COURTESY OF WESTGATE MENNONITE COLLEGIATE

Heidi Koop, left, and James Friesen are Westgate Mennonite Collegiate's new vice-principal and principal, respectively.

Westgate Mennonite Collegiate kicked off the 2022/2023 school year under new leadership, after long-running principal Bob Hummelt retired this summer. The independent school in Winnipeg, Man., appointed James Friesen as principal and Heidi Koop as vice-principal. Friesen began working as a teacher at Westgate in 1992 and spent the last five years as vice-principal. Koop has been a teacher at Westgate since 2015, previously teaching in Winnipeg's German bilingual-school system. They will both continue teaching some courses, Friesen in world religions and Koop in calculus and German. Off to a busy start, their first big task as a team was hiring four new staff members to fill openings left by staff leaving or retiring. Friesen and Koop work well together, their skills complementing each other. Friesen explains that Westgate isn't a structure controlled by one person making all the decisions, but rather a community of staff working together. "I never in a million years expected I would be in this role," Friesen says. Koop says, "I look forward to helping shape the community with our students, staff, parents, and wider community and to see God's spirit working." The questions of purpose and identity are ones Friesen and Koop face now and in the coming years, as Westgate's student body becomes increasingly less Mennonite.

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

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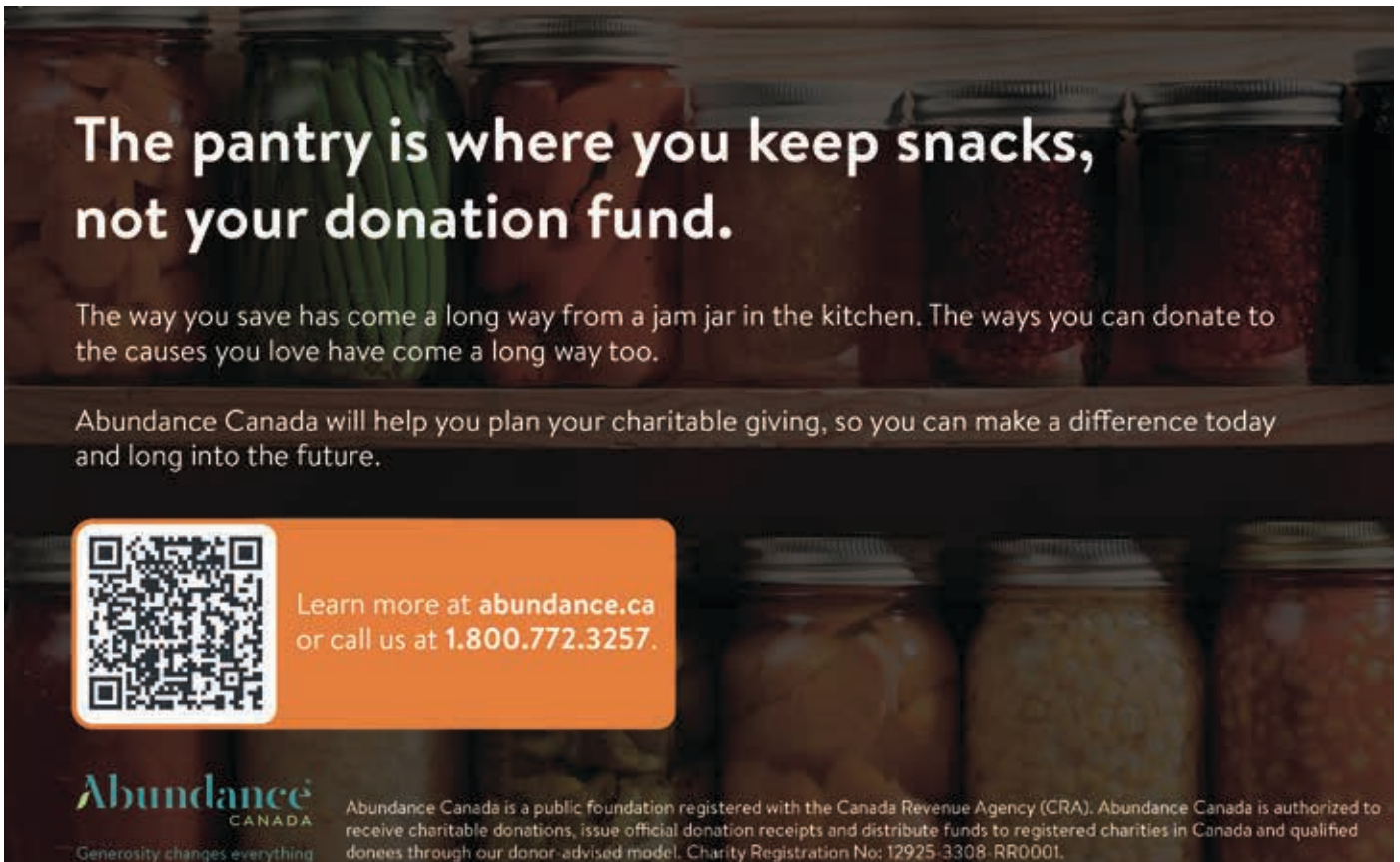




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Meetings study unity, affirm new members

The General Council worshipped, prayed and considered the global fellowship of churches in Mennonite World Conference at in-person meetings this past July.

canadianmennonite.org/mwcmmeetings



MCC supplies arrive for displaced Ukrainians

Five containers shipped by Mennonite Central Committee, each loaded with essential relief items, have arrived in Ukraine.

canadianmennonite.org/mccsupplies



A 2022 take on Jesus calling his first disciples

For Mennonite Church Canada's latest gathering, Winnipeg dramatist Arlyn Friesen Epp created "About those Fish..." a short film reimagining Luke 5:1-11.

canadianmennonite.org/aboutfish



Watch: "Mennonites Put the Oba in Manitoba"

Watch a video by a band of Mennonites from Manitoba that has been viewed more than 156,000 times since it was uploaded to YouTube in October 2020.

canadianmennonite.org/quonbros

UpComing

Amish Mennonites to celebrate 200 years in Canada

In 1822, Christian Nafziger travelled to Canada via the United States, looking for a place where impoverished Amish people from the southern German states could find farms. The following year, several families moved to Wilmot Township, west of what is now Kitchener-Waterloo, Ont., and established a thriving Amish community. The first Amish congregation was established in 1824. To celebrate this bicentennial, descendants of these families have planned a series of events, including bus tours, a cappella hymn sings, Indigenous awareness workshops and a Thanksgiving worship service at Steinmann Mennonite Church in Baden, Ont., on Oct. 2, at 7:30 p.m. A display of Ontario Amish Mennonite artifacts and memorabilia will be available from 4 p.m. Full-day bus tours will be held on Sept. 28 and Oct. 15, while half-day tours are on Oct. 1, both morning and afternoon. To register for a bus tour, contact Ken J. and Joyce Jantzi, kjjantzi@gmail.com or 519-496-4044. A hymn sing will be at East Zorra Mennonite Church, near Tavistock, on Sept. 25 at 7:30 p.m. Steinmann Mennonite is also hosting a "National Day of Truth and Reconciliation" on Sept. 30, 7:30 p.m., with Rebecca Seiling and David G. Neufeld, to explore untold stories and connections between the land, Indigenous people and settlers.

—BY BARB DRAPER



October 5 Indigenous-Settler relations:

What steps are you taking in your context to further reconciliation?

Join Online Media Manager Aaron Epp and guests to talk about current events in the church and the world.



Niigaan Sinclair



Doyle Wiebe



Allegra Friesen Epp

Watch *Canadian Mennonite* for details or go to www.canadianmennonite.org/events

Held on Zoom, 8:00 pm ET

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CANADIAN
MENNONITE

Calendar

British Columbia

Oct. 14-16: MC B.C. ladies retreat, at Camp Squeah. Theme: "Alive in Christ: Body, mind and soul," with speaker Laurel D. Hildebrandt. Register at mcbc.ca.

Oct. 29: Arts festival fundraiser for MC B.C.'s Indigenous relations ministry, featuring MC B.C. and Emily Carr student artists, in Vancouver, at 2 p.m., location TBA.

Manitoba

Sept. 28: CMU hosts a virtual open house, at 6 p.m. For more information, visit cmu.ca/virtual-open-house.

Sept. 29: Book launch for “Walking Together: Intercultural Stories of Love and Acceptance,” by Edith and Neill von Gunten. Event will be held in person at CommonWord and by livestream at 7 p.m. (CDT).

Oct. 21: CMU open house, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Oct. 21-22: “Departing Canada, encountering Latin America” a conference reflecting on the centenary of Mennonite emigration from Canada to Mexico and Paraguay,” at the University of Winnipeg. To register for free, visit ctms.uwinnipeg.ca.

Oct. 22, 23: Camps with Meaning fundraising banquets: (22) at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Winkler; (23) at Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg. For more information, visit campswithmeaning.org.

Oct. 29, 30: Canadian Foodgrains Bank hosts its “Singin’ in the Grain” fundraising events featuring CMU singers and the Faith and Life Women’s Choir. (29) at Douglas Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.; (30) at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Winkler, at 3 p.m. All funds raised go to addressing food insecurity.

Nov. 4: CMU campus visit day, at 1 p.m.

Ontario

Sept. 30: Truth and Reconciliation and the Amish Bicentennial at Steinmann Mennonite Church, 7:30 p.m., with Rebecca Seiling and David G. Neufeld, reflecting on connections between land, Indigenous people and settlers.

Sept. 30-Oct. 2: “Seeking transformation: A retreat for Christian settlers,” at the Five Oaks Centre in Paris, Ont, with facilitators Derek Suderman and Tanya Dyck Steinmann. For more information, or to register, visit bit.ly/3COwyql.

Oct. 2: Amish Mennonite heritage thanksgiving worship service at Steinmann Mennonite Church, 7 p.m. Display of Amish Mennonite artifacts and memorabilia on display from 4 p.m.

Oct. 14: “Diverse Paths,” A Low German networking conference to learn and explore cultural nuances of Low German-speaking

community, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo.

Oct. 18: “Ministering in a liminal space” workshop, at 50 Kent Avenue, Kitchener, from 7 to 9 p.m. Leader: Al Rempel. For more information, or to register, visit bit.ly/3q0iq6c.

Oct. 25: “Pastoral conversations: Compassion fatigue,” with speaker Wanda Wagler-Martin, on Zoom, from 2 to 3:30 p.m.

For more information, or to register, visit bit.ly/3KBcs5k.

Oct. 27: MCC hosts “The power of partnership: An evening with Malcolm Gladwell,” at Bingemans Conference Centre, Kitchener, at 6 p.m. Visit mcccanada.ca/get-involved/events for more information.

Tickets can be purchased online at powerofpartnership.ca.

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

Classifieds

Employment Opportunities

MennoMedia seeks a **Director of Development and Partner Engagement** to connect the story and mission of MennoMedia with people who want to make a difference. This individual is responsible for driving the organization’s overall fundraising strategy as part of the leadership team, achieving short- and long-term fundraising objectives, and engaging with donors, pastors, and partner organizations. Send résumé, cover letter, references to Publisher Amy Gingerich at AmyG@MennoMedia.org.



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Announcement

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Join us at **Mennonite Fellowship of Montreal** located in the heart of the city.

To learn more, email pastor@mfmtl.org or visit our website at www.mfmtl.org.



PHOTO COURTESY OF GORDON ALLABY

On Aug. 30, Waterloo North Mennonite Church's ministry team set up 158 chairs at the side of the road as a reminder to passersby that that many people lost their lives to toxic drugs in Ontario's Waterloo Region in 2021. That evening, Melina Pearson, the outreach coordinator for Bereaved Families of Ontario, spoke, as did a couple others who have been personally touched by the death of a loved one. Forty people attended the service, mostly from Waterloo North, but some were friends of friends directly affected by toxic drug deaths. The brief service was very well received and appreciated, according to Pastor Gordon Allaby. A few people stopped by the display and CTV News reported on the event.

Photo finish

PHOTO BY RICHARD THIESSEN / TEXT BY AMY RINNER WADDELL

Quilts were on display at the Mennonite Heritage Museum in Abbotsford, B.C., during the month of August, in preparation for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) British Columbia's annual Festival for World Relief that runs from September 16 to 17. While the quilts are no longer auctioned off at the festival, they are sold from the quilting room at the MCC Centre throughout the year, and some are sold at the Festival, along with aprons, table runners and other handcrafted goods. Pictured, the quilts serve as a backdrop for a string ensemble concert spearheaded by local musician Calvin Dyck on Aug. 21.

