

CANADIAN MENNONITE

February 27, 2023 Volume 27 Number 4



Women Talking

From Bolivia to Hollywood,
Mennonites in the spotlight

INSIDE

- Dump truck affirmation 15
- Disrupting images of disability 22
- The question of camps 24

EDITORIAL

Red carpet hayloft

BY WILL BRAUN

editor@canadianmennonite.org



I prefer books and sky to screens and Hollywood, but the fact that kerchief-clad colony women will appear on-screen at Hollywood's biggest event creates a moment of opportunity for our church (see pages 4 - 11).

The film adaptation of Miriam Toews' novel, *Women Talking*, is nominated for Best Picture at the March 12 Academy Awards. For me, the film evokes valuable questions about sexual violence, faith, colony women, progress and how we view our colony cousins.

The book and film use as a starting point the so-called ghost rapes which involved mass serial rape on the Manitoba Colony in Bolivia, something I was researching and writing about when the book came out in 2018. Wilmar Harder, who has much experience with colonies, asked me: "Who tells the story and why?" I concluded that if I was not willing to humbly learn from colony Mennonites I should keep quiet.

The film's director, Sarah Polley, sidesteps this by treating the film as "fable." Her characters—who spend two days in a hayloft discussing how to respond to their hellish situation—are both Mennonite and not.

While the film plot deviates from actual events, the widespread rape was real. Men do horrific things to women, and whether in war zones, Hollywood, reserves or religious enclaves, perpetrators are held to account in only a tiny fraction of cases. What I see in the film and the responses I have heard is an immense, largely hidden pool of

unresolved female woundedness, along with a power in openly grappling with it. The film resonates mightily in the collective hayloft, including in our branch of Mennonitism. Women have much to talk about—much that would not be expressed on Sunday morning or in mixed company.

In *Women Talking*, faith is integral to struggle and healing. While Toews and Polley insert much of their own ways of thinking into the characters, they fully allow for faith. And it is actual faith—believing in things unseen, not just subscribing to a set of principles. The women contend with forgiveness in the context of Christianity. They seek divine guidance. They find solace in scripture. It's beautiful, and all from a writer who describes herself as a "secular Mennonite."

In a famous TED Talk, Nigerian writer Chimamanda Adichie warns against "the danger of a single story," of solidifying impressions based on a lone narrative. This in mind, I add to the film's story of Mennonites the many accounts I have heard of welcome, neighbourliness and contentment on colonies. I add the story of a Manitoba Colony leader weeping over the rape saga. I also add stories of dysfunction well beyond that explored by Toews.

Then I add the story of Circles of Support and Accountability, a case in which Mennonites have done courageous and creative work to rehabilitate sexual offenders and reduce sexual assault. These multiple narratives compliment rather than negate one another.

As Jean Friedman-Rudovsky notes on

page 6, the story of the actual women of Bolivia has been largely lost on the way to the red carpet. A woman from B.C. called me recently to ask, tearfully: "What about the women of Bolivia?"

Conclusive information is not available, but a credible contact told me he had spoken with a colony leader in February and was told there have been no similar cases for several years. Still, no one claims those colonies are without serious challenges.

I have learned from Mennonite elders both to value art and listen to those who have left the church. Though every message and messenger are imperfect, our church will be better for listening to Toews, as well as to the many others who might need a hayloft meeting. While I have critiqued Toews' approach to colony Mennonites, we have much to learn from her, as we do from colony Mennonites themselves, whose very lives constitute a rebuke of our blind acceptance of the individualized, highly consumptive, tech-addicted, anti-agrarian ways of the world.

Fittingly, in the week I saw *Women Talking*, I was completing restoration of the old hayloft on our farm. Built by conservative Mennonites, it is a place where men have worked, children played and barn swallows tended their young. My wife and I are now considering a potential new use for the kindly old loft, given all that Mennonite women in our area have to talk about. ☘



Funded by the
Government
of Canada

ISSN 1480-042X

Canada

CONTENTS

February 27, 2023 / Vol. 27, No. 4

ABOUT THE COVER

Actor Rooney Mara stars as Ona in the film *Women Talking*. On pages 4 to 8 we review the movie, present five responses to it, talk about the actual women behind the story and interview actual Mennos who worked behind the scenes.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL GIBSON/ORION PICTURES

Two Ohio families move to Ontario 18
A joint move north of the border suits the Kauffman families well

Mario and the Mennos set to air in September 20
New sitcom tells story of Mennonite-Filipino family dynamics.

MCC responds to earthquakes in Syria 21
Relief agency works with partner agencies to meet urgent needs following the Feb. 6 quakes while working to determine longer-term projects and responses.

Women Talking 4
With a movie based on assaults of Mennonite women now in theatres, we offer a review, five responses, a look at Mennos behind the scenes, and consideration of the actual women behind the story.



Regular features:
For discussion 11 Readers write 12 Milestones 13
Schools Directory 30 Calendar 31 Classifieds 31

Camp really matters Christine M. Epp 14

Dump truck affirmation Ed Olfert 15

Beyond free speech Randolph Haluza-DeLay 16

A shielded sleep Joshua Penfold 17

**CANADIAN
MENNONITE**

490 Dutton Drive, Unit C5,
Waterloo, ON, N2L 6H7

Phone: 519-884-3810 | Toll-free: 1-800-378-2524

Facebook: facebook.com/CanadianMennonite
Twitter: @CanMenno
Instagram: @canadianmennonite

Please send all material to be considered for publication to

General submission address: submit@canadianmennonite.org

Readers Write: letters@canadianmennonite.org

Milestones announcements: milestones@canadianmennonite.org

Calendar announcements: calendar@canadianmennonite.org

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 40063104 REGISTRATION NO. 09613

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

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

Published by Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service. Regional churches and MC Canada appoint directors to the board and provide about one third of *Canadian Mennonite's* budget.

Board Chair, Henry Krause, hakrause@telus.net, 604-888-3192

Canadian Mennonite Staff

Publisher: Tobi Thiessen, publisher@canadianmennonite.org

Editor: Will Braun, editor@canadianmennonite.org

Managing Editor: Ross W. Muir, managinged@canadianmennonite.org

Graphic Designer: Betty Avery, designer@canadianmennonite.org

Online Media Manager: Aaron Epp, onlinemgr@canadianmennonite.org

Editorial Assistant: Barb Draper, edassist@canadianmennonite.org

Advertising: advert@canadianmennonite.org

B.C. Correspondent: Amy Rinner Waddell, bc@canadianmennonite.org

Alberta Correspondent: ab@canadianmennonite.org

Saskatchewan Correspondent: Emily Summach, sk@canadianmennonite.org

Manitoba Correspondent: Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe, mb@canadianmennonite.org

Eastern Canada Correspondent: ec@canadianmennonite.org

One-Year Subscription Rates

Canada: \$52 + tax (depends on province where subscriber lives)

U.S.: \$70 International (outside U.S.): \$93.10

Subscriptions/address changes

office@canadianmennonite.org

1-800-378-2524 ext. 1

FEATURE

Women Talking

With the film adaptation of Miriam Toews's novel *Women Talking* nominated for the biggest prize in Hollywood, the spotlight is focused on Mennonites like never before. In this red carpet moment, we present various responses to the film, interview actual Mennos behind the scenes, and ask about the actual women behind the story.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL GIBSON/ORION PICTURES

Actors Rooney Mara (left), Claire Foy, Judith Ivey, Sheila McCarthy, Michelle McLeod and Jessie Buckley on the set of *Women Talking*.

FILM REVIEW

By Mandy Elliott
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

What do we do when we are wronged: Nothing? Stay and fight? Or do we leave? These questions form the backbone of *Women Talking*, a 2022 film directed

by Sarah Polley and adapted from Miriam Toews's acclaimed novel of the same name.

The plot is simple, though not easy: A group of women belonging to an ultraconservative religious community meets in a hayloft to discuss their options in response to

the repeated assaults against them by numerous men in the colony. The men use livestock tranquilizer to incapacitate women and girls in their homes, and then rape them. Colony men suggest Satan is to blame and threaten excommunication if the women won't forgive.

After the women democratically dismiss the option of doing nothing, most of the film then focuses on the debate between staying to fight or leaving. Because the women have been kept illiterate, they recruit August (played by Ben Whishaw), the resident ally and schoolteacher, to take minutes of their hayloft meeting. The film's demure and supportive version of August is an improvement on his appointment as the narrator in the novel, telling the women's stories second-hand.

The discussion is intercut with brief but visceral flashbacks of women realizing they had been raped: Ona (Rooney Mara) wakes up to bruises on her thighs and a fetus in her belly; Greta (Sheila McCarthy) wakes up to a bloody mouth full of broken teeth. Far from gratuitous, these short scenes underscore the grief and bewilderment the women feel. They make the rage of Salome (Claire Foy) and Mariche (Jessie Buckley), the clarity of Ona, and the wisdom of Agata (Judith Ivey), and Greta agonizingly palpable.

In one particularly gut-wrenching scene, we learn about the rape of Salome's four-year-old daughter, Miep (Emily Mitchell). Salome almost relishes her assertion that, if she stays, she will commit murder. Calmly, Greta and Ona help her understand that staying in such an abusive situation, knowing that she craves vengeance, betrays her faith's tenet of pacifism. She must leave to save her own soul.

The nature of forgiveness is at the film's centre. The women ultimately decide that immediate forgiveness is impossible, especially knowing that their sons are being steeped in the same rhetoric of patriarchal power their fathers were. Nobody forces quick forgiveness. On the contrary, Ona is concerned that the "misuse of



PHOTO BY MICHAEL GIBSON/ORION PICTURES

Ben Whishaw (left) stars as August, Rooney Mara as Ona and Claire Foy as Salome in *Women Talking*.

forgiveness" would confuse forgiving the men with giving them permission to continue their abuse. By the end, the film shows us that forgiveness is something to consider deeply.

While the protagonists are mainly women, August Winter plays Melvin, a young trans man. Melvin has been abused and impregnated by his brother. By the end, the women recognize that Melvin's stake in the decision is just as valid as theirs.

The film avoids giving any of the colony's men, besides August, screen time, but shows the boys in the colony.

While the film's sombre grey aesthetic conveys the weight of its subject matter; its narrative also leaves room for women's joy. There are sorrows aplenty, but there is also laughter, camaraderie and excitement. Deliberations are particularly lightened by Autje (Kate Hallett) and Neitje (Liv McNeil), who join the meetings as survivors, but also as girls who giggle and horse around out of boredom.

Foy and Buckley lead the astonishing ensemble cast. The production design is respectful and well-researched, and the

cinematography features gorgeous wide shots of wide-open farmland, the colour unsaturated and evocative of a place out of time in a culture all its own.

Women Talking pulls the threads of sorrow, joy, anger and faith together to explore the nature of forgiveness and patriarchy, and the determination that these women matter enough to leave their abusers behind.

While Toews's original story is linked to the "ghost rapes" at the Manitoba Colony in Bolivia more than a decade ago, the film never mentions Mennonites of any geographic location. Instead, Polley considers the film a "fable" and the plot diverges significantly from historical events.

Women Talking has been nominated for Best Picture and Best Adapted Screenplay at the 95th Academy Awards. It is now showing in select theatres. ♯

Mandy Elliott is an assistant professor of English and film studies at Booth University College in Winnipeg, where she attends Hope Mennonite Church.

What about the women of Manitoba Colony?

By Aaron Epp
Senior Writer

After opening in select movie theatres before Christmas, *Women Talking* received a wide release last month. For Jean Friedman-Rudovsky, it marked 10 years since she interviewed some of the women who inspired Miriam Toews's novel the film is based on.

with animal anaesthetic. Eight men eventually stood trial in August 2011 for the crimes and were sentenced to prison.

The story inspired Toews to write *Women Talking*, in which a group of conservative Mennonite women who have been sexually assaulted by men in

"After that, I couldn't get what happened in Manitoba Colony out of my mind," she says in a phone interview. "I wanted to know more about what the women were feeling—how they were coping in the aftermath."

That led her and her brother, photo-journalist Noah Friedman-Rudovsky, to spend time in Manitoba Colony. They interviewed women and church leaders from the community, which resulted in a feature article and a 25-minute documentary published by *Vice*.

Looking back on her time in Manitoba Colony, one of the things that sticks out was the ongoing problem of sexual abuse and incest taking place in families. There were also reports that the rapes were ongoing.

The conclusion many of the women she spoke with had come to—that they had been assaulted because God was testing them or punishing them for their sins—also sticks out to her.

"The answer many women had come to was to double down on their faith, in adherence to Mennonite rules and behaviours and expectations," she says. "And that, of course, is very different from Miriam's novel and the film, where they take the creative liberties to imagine a really different outcome and perspective for the women."

Generally speaking, Friedman-Rudovsky says, the women she interviewed were curious, engaged, loving and kind.

"I think they were struggling to make sense of the things that happened, and were still happening," she says. "They were still in a state of some fear and some anger. I wouldn't say that a lot of them demonstrated anger in a way that I could see, but there was some of that."



PHOTO COURTESY OF JEAN FRIEDMAN-RUDOVSKY

Jean Friedman-Rudovsky (in the yellow shirt) pictured in Manitoba Colony in 2013. She is pictured with the family that hosted her and her now-husband Sebastian Malter who joined her for her first couple days in the colony.

In January 2013, Friedman-Rudovsky spent nearly two weeks living with the family of a community leader in the Manitoba Colony, an ultra-conservative, Low German-speaking Mennonite community in Bolivia. From 2005 to 2009, a group of men from the colony raped more than 130 colony women and girls during the night after sedating them

their community meet to decide how they will respond.

The film version, adapted and directed by Sarah Polley, has been nominated for two Academy Awards.

Friedman-Rudovsky, a freelance investigative journalist from Philadelphia, Pa., learned about the story while living in Bolivia. She covered the trial for *Time*.

A key aspect of Friedman-Rudovsky's approach while reporting the story was to try to figure out where the women were coming from.

"They do have agency in parts of their own lives, even if it is very different from how I live my life," she says. "So I tried to understand their religious outlook and their perspective on life as much as I could, because I felt that's how I would be able to do justice to their story."

Toews begins *Women Talking* with a page-long author's note summarizing the Manitoba Colony story and stating that her novel is a reaction through fiction to the true-life events. She calls the novel, "an act of female imagination."

The film opens with a preface that

uses that same phrase. Friedman-Rudovsky questions Polley's decision not to more explicitly base the film on the real-life story.

"I understand that artistic decision . . . [but] there's also something that's lost, and I think what's lost is the public understanding that these are real things that happened to real people," she says. "For there to not be an acknowledgment in the film that this is based on what happened to real women, I just wonder what women in the colony would think of that."

Still, Friedman-Rudovsky is glad the book and film exist. She describes them as moving, powerful works of art. "I'm glad it's encouraging more conversation

around sexual violence, around these fine lines [around] the complexities of faith and forgiveness and democracy and women's voices and women's rights. I think it's awesome."

Something she wants people to know about the women of Manitoba Colony is that, like the characters in *Women Talking*, they had different reactions to what they experienced.

"I am sure that there was a range of emotions that each of these survivors had that included all of the feelings that Toews demonstrated and more," she says. "I saw pieces of lots of different emotions, and women grappling with how to move forward in different ways." ❧

Five responses

Visceral

There's lots that could be said about the story, the craft, the colour tones, setting, critique or praise of various characters, the connections to the original story of Mennonites in Bolivia—all things that I've encountered in reviews or Facebook discussions.

But I find myself disinterested in all that now, because this movie affected me on a visceral, rather than intellectual, level. I'm not even quite sure how to articulate it, except that it moved me beyond the specifics of that story into the universal, and thus the specifics of my own.

Not that I've ever experienced anything as brutal as the women in the movie or the originating events—I've been privileged in that sense for sure—but nevertheless I knew myself in their arguments, their anger, their mutual consolations, and, I hope, their courage. I think I saw myself in every face, though, being older, I especially loved the older women: Greta and Agate in the barn conversations, but also Scarface, who steps away from the conversation.

This is a movie that tackles true and hard things, like innocence and



PHOTO BY MICHAEL GIBSON/ORION PICTURES

Actors Emily Mitchell, Claire Foy and Rooney Mara.

powerlessness and violence and forgiveness and God, and maybe it was powerful to me precisely because what the women want in the story is what I truly want as well: We want our children to be safe, we want to be steadfast in our faith, we want to think.

—Dora Dueck, novelist, *Delta*, B.C.

A larger truth

I appreciated the movie as a very sensitive artistic expression of the power of oppressed women joining together to resist patriarchal violence. I loved the different women and the unique perspective each brought to the conversation about whether to do

nothing, stay and fight back, or leave. All the characters were wonderfully cast and acted. I thought the cinematography was exquisitely beautiful, especially the multiple scenes of children playing outdoors.

But what I appreciated most were the deep and nuanced conversations among the women about faith, forgiveness, complicity and love, and the women's capacity to imagine a world where they are allowed to think and where their children are safe. I also liked the little touches of humour inserted here and there to lighten the tone.

When I first read Miriam Toews's book, I was troubled by a sense of how unrealistic the whole scenario was. Could illiterate colony women talk in such sophisticated and seemingly educated ways? Would they actually recruit a male teacher to take minutes of their discussion? Would they really contemplate leaving their home and heading into the unknown en masse?

For whatever reason, the movie's lack of "realism" did not bother me. There is a larger truth, and the movie speaks to that truth through its sensitive portrayal of women finding their voice and a faith-filled, nonviolent response to horrendous abuse.

—*Esther Epp-Thiessen, retired MCC worker, Winnipeg*

Painful

I love Miriam Toews. I love her audacity, her wit, her willingness to look at the Mennonite experience as both an insider and outsider. It can be painful reading when her characters express things I can relate to as a Mennonite woman who grew up feeling like both insider and outsider.

On my mother's side, we're from a long line of Mennonites in the Netherlands. But when we immigrated to Canada, we had to explain again and again that just because we didn't have the usual traditions—there's no way we could play the Mennonite name game and my mother didn't bake—we were still deeply and wholly Anabaptist. We don't all ride in buggies, wear head coverings or live without electricity

either. But some of us do.

When people find out I'm Mennonite, I'm asked the usual questions: "What did you think of the CBC series *Pure*?" "Have you seen *Breaking Amish*?" "Does Miriam Toews speak for all Mennonites?" I say that Miriam wrestles with themes of loneliness, oppression, mental illness and the search for independence, as many of us do.

The facts behind *Women Talking* are so shocking, so unbelievable, so violent, that I can hardly bear to think that it, too, is part of our Mennonite story. But I decided to see how the brave and honest Canadian filmmaker Sarah Polley would tell the story.

It was as painful as I imagined. But as I watched, I realized it was only partly a Mennonite story. In reality, it's a story about patriarchy and oppression, of a closed community that forces everyone to stick to its rigid rules. This sort of story is not confined to Mennonite circles. It can happen whenever learning, growth and openness are strictly controlled, when leaders frown on change or new ways of discerning God's will.

I pray that everyone who sees *Women Talking* will be moved not only by the story, but will find hope that there are people who ask hard questions about their futures and their communities, whoever or wherever they are, if they're Mennonite or not.

—*Marieke Meyer, former CBC radio producer, now working at Toronto United Mennonite Church*

To bear witness

When the book *Women Talking* came out in 2018 to much acclaim, some critics asked whether Toews accurately represented colony Mennonites. In the preface, Toews tries to get in front of this criticism by saying the book is "a reaction in fiction" and "an act of female imagination."

Sarah Polley's film adaptation puts the "female imagination" line on the screen at the beginning. She further distances the film from real-life events: never is the word "Mennonite" used. Gone are most of the specifics of how the colony is

structured. The head of the colony, Peters in the novel, is not named. Gone are the occasional Low-German phrases. Among other functions, these changes shift this story into a more allegorical realm. It becomes almost a parable.

And, since parables are meant to teach, we must ask ourselves what the film teaches. It provides a hope-filled vision of one possible reaction to systemic sexual violence in a patriarchal society.

The first step is listening to victims. Polley highlights this with one of the more significant departures from the novel. In Toews's novel, we read the meeting minutes of August Epp, the one male allowed to sit in on the meetings. In the film, the narrator is Autje, one of the teenagers at the meetings. Autje tells the story to an unborn child. The story now comes directly from one of the victims. Autje is teaching this young one about their history. This theme of education is vital.

The action of the movie is the decision of the women on how to respond to the violence they suffer. In this, we also see and hear the various ways these women are affected by sexual violence. They sit with each other. They listen to each other's pain, anger, sorrow and grief. They argue. They experience these things with each other, all grasping for ways to cope.

Some women recite Bible verses or sing beloved songs. Some smoke. Some have panic attacks. Some harden their hearts. Some throw their pain around indiscriminately, almost seeking to wound.

We bear witness to these women bearing witness to each other. The seemingly simple title, *Women Talking*, is shown to be deeply, beautifully complicated.

The women discuss safety for themselves and vulnerable members of their community. Unfortunately, it is not a straight line. Their final decision and final step are not really final at all. They will need to teach the next generation gentleness, humility, openness. The hope at the end of the film is that ways that have led to such harm can be unlearned.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL GIBSON/ORION PICTURES

A scene from the hayloft meeting at the centre of *Women Talking*.

If the colony in the film is to be understood as a real place, then this story becomes one of western ideals being presented as superior.

However, if read as an allegory or parable about how to respond to systemic sexual violence, *Women Talking* provides a beautiful and necessary example of what could be done.

—Adam Klassen Bartel, librarian at Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, Winnipeg

Room to imagine

In *Women Talking*, eight women imagine a new world for themselves and their families, a world where they can live without male violence and

domination. This intergenerational group of women speak—angrily, defiantly, with care, with grief—while one man, August, records their words.

I've heard some viewers criticize the film for its lack of authenticity, that it's difficult to believe the story because all the men, apart from August, are absent, but I think their absence is integral to Sarah Polley's project. *Women Talking* is not an exploration of the evil actions of men. Polley isn't interested in the nuanced perspectives the men of the colony may hold, nor does her film ask why the male villagers have learned to dehumanize and hate women.

I believe Polley centres women talking because she believes in the power and importance of their articulation. Their

conversation, with all its dynamic disagreement, is the condition that makes hope and healing possible for them to imagine. These women have been “bruised and infected,” they have been “preyed upon like animals.” They have also been dismissed and doubted by the men in the colony—accused of fabricating their accounts of abuse, or of somehow deserving it as a form of demonic punishment.

Rather than aiming for verisimilitude, *Women Talking* is a work of “female imagination” that insists on creating a space in which women's stories are listened to and believed.

—Sarah Ens, writer and editor, Winnipeg

Barns and kerchiefs

The Mennonites behind the scenes of Women Talking

By Aaron Epp
Senior Writer

Not many farmers walk out of a movie theatre and say, “It’s a lot of fun seeing our farm on the big screen.” But that’s what Chris Burkholder thought after he watched *Women Talking* at the Toronto International Film Festival last fall.

Burkholder and his brothers Rich and Ryan own the farm site in Claremont, Ont., where the movie was filmed in the summer of 2021. It’s one of a handful of locations on the 1,200 hectares of farmland the brothers own that they rent

to film and TV production companies.

“We have a lot of fun doing it,” says Burkholder, who lives in Stouffville, Ont., and attends Community Mennonite Church there. “It fills in some of the less busy times when we’re not farming . . . so it works out well for us.”

In addition to the Burkholders’ farm, director Sarah Polley and her cast and crew shot parts of the film on a soundstage at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto. To recreate the barn from the Burkholders’ property,

production designer Peter Cosco turned to set designer Andrew Redekop.

Unbeknownst to Cosco at the time, Redekop has Mennonite ancestry.

Redekop produced the architectural drawings that were used to build the soundstage version of the barn, and he helped ensure that it matched the real-life barn as closely as possible.

“I really like getting into the nitty-gritty of the details of the location,” says Redekop, who has worked in the film industry for 25 years. “Most of what



PHOTO BY MICHAEL GIBSON/ORION PICTURES

The set of Women Talking at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto.

I do is episodic TV, which is a hectic schedule, so it's nice to have time to finesse a set and extract all the detail you can from the existing location and incorporate it into the set."

Redekop introduced Cosco to *Making Believe: Questions About Mennonites and Art*, a book his aunt, retired University of Toronto professor Magdalene Redekop, published in 2020. "I wouldn't have stumbled on that on my own," Cosco says. "It was great having that inside line that [Andrew was] able to provide."

Cosco adds that, although the characters in the film are never identified as Mennonite, the filmmakers took their inspiration from various Mennonite communities when creating the film's aesthetic.

"[Sarah Polley] wanted to not be specific about where this was and who these people were," Cosco says. "That freed us up a little bit because we were able to draw on a lot of research from Mennonite colonies in Belize, in Mexico, in Bolivia, in Uruguay"

For Quita Alfred, the film's costume designer, creating clothing that wouldn't look out of place in a conservative Mennonite community meant turning to Mary Anne Hildebrand of Winkler, Man., and Esther Janzen of St. Clements, Ont.

Both Hildebrand and Janzen have experience working with conservative Mennonite communities. They helped Alfred research the costuming, and introduced her to vendors and makers that assisted with everything from fabric choices to putting ribbons on the hats that were worn in the movie.

Hildebrand and Janzen are named as consultants in the film's credits. Their help was invaluable, Alfred says. "One of the most important aspects of the help Mary Anne and Esther gave me was cultural sensitivity and helping me navigate dealing with the more traditional Mennonite communities in a culturally sensitive way," Alfred says. "Plus, they fed me a lot. In true Mennonite fashion, we ate a lot of soup and a lot of *Platz* [fruit square]."

Hildebrand, who attends Pembina Mennonite Fellowship in Morden, Man.,



PHOTO BY MICHAEL GIBSON/ORION PICTURES

Director Sarah Polley on the set of her film *Women Talking*.

had reservations about getting involved with the film at first. She was concerned that it would create a permanent association between Bolivian Mennonites and sexual abuse.

In the end, she was pleased with her contributions to the film and the way it

turned out. She's seen it twice so far. "It's fantastic that the women are portrayed as so powerful in those mundane clothes," she says. "[The filmmakers] have brought something to light in this movie [sexual abuse] for us Mennonites that we need to talk about much more." ❧

/// For discussion

1. What are some of the complexities of faith and forgiveness in this story?
2. Do you know of examples of people being forced or coerced to forgive? In which circumstances has patriarchy been a problem among Mennonites?
3. If a work of fiction, such as *Women Talking*, is based on true events, how important is it that the details be accurate? Do the book and movie run the risk of misappropriating Mennonite culture?
4. What can the movie teach about closed communities with rigid rules? Are such communities destined to end in abuse?
5. What might the people of Manitoba Colony think about *Women Talking*?

—By Barb Draper

See related resources at
www.commonword.ca/go/2119

CommonWord
 Bookstore and Resource Centre

OPINION

/// Readers write

✉ Complexities of pacifism

Below are four responses to “Conscientious” (Jan. 30), which critiqued the Canadian government purchase of fighter jets.

Horrors in Ukraine

If countries do not stand up to dictators like Putin, Hitler, Mussolini and Napoleon, we would not have the freedoms we enjoy now.

Yes, we need the pacifists as well to promote peace, but what about the Mennonites in Ukraine dealing directly with the horrors of war? They need assistance with food, shelter and a safe place to live.

I think of my fiancée Olga, her mother Marie and her son fighting against the Russians. They need God’s peace and his love to survive, too. Prayer is an integral part of their survival.

GREG GERSTENBERGER (FACEBOOK COMMENT)

How to make peace

Community Peacemaker Teams (CPT) got its start as a response to Ron Sider’s challenging question: What would happen if 10,000 people were willing to place themselves between parties in conflict? I was a member of CPT for a number of years, serving in Canada and the U.S., and I doubt we ever even got close to 1 percent of Sider’s goal.

As for military peacekeeping, it almost sounds like an oxymoron. Canadian military personnel served in Korea as part of a peacekeeping effort in the 1950s. Many Canadian soldiers wore the blue berets in Cyprus, where they placed themselves between the two groups who seemed hell-bent on chasing each other off the island. Yes, the Canadians had guns and they protected themselves when necessary. But they avoided choosing sides.

That’s the rub—where do we find the willpower to stand, nonjudgmentally, between aggressors? Can we ask that of our military? Do we even need a military?

That last question is like asking if we need police in our communities. Of course we do because there are some “bad actors” out there.

So where does my rambling get us? Probably back at the beginning, with each of us struggling to figure out our own response to a very difficult question.

JOHN FINLAY (ONLINE COMMENT)

What if it were us?

As someone who was born and lived in a country that was attacked and bombarded by a Second World War despot—in some ways similar to Ukraine now—I have one question to ask: What would be the response of those whose comments were sought for the “Conscientious” article, as well as Mennonites at large, if it was not Ukraine being so criminally and horribly attacked, but we ourselves—our

families and loved ones here in Canada?

MICHAEL NEWARK, WELLESLEY, ONT. (ONLINE COMMENT)

Economic benefits of planes

Officially, the Canadian government is buying the 88 F35 fighter jets for “defence.” However, the government also expects some benefits.

According to Public Services and Procurement Canada, this purchase will contribute more than \$425 million to Canada’s gross domestic product annually, and close to 3,300 jobs annually. In other words, it is also a way of subsidizing our aviation industry.

I suspect these facts are a large part of the motive.

J.G. (JIM) SUDERMAN, WINNIPEG

✉ Article ‘wildly off-base’

From a position of privilege, existential urgency is often a luxury of abstraction. To refer to issues of social justice—which are matters of survival for some—as “boring” (“To set a soul aflame,” Jan. 30) reflects a startling disconnect.

In fairness, the neo-liberalism adopted by so many progressive churches of privilege often lacks the depth and nuance necessary to explore these realities beyond ideological concepts.

I have spent decades deeply engaged in communities of people living on the margins of society, of power and of the church. Their suffering is measurable on a clinical level, for which therapy has been a rarely accessible, yet desperately needed, salvation. And when God has been the weapon used to exact that suffering, the language of “sin, judgment, guilt . . . repentance, punishment, suffering, crucifixion, deliverance, salvation . . .” must be adapted.

I am not saying that there is not a conversation to be had. Rather, I am saying the diagnosis presented [in the article] is wildly off-base and will only perpetuate harm to the most vulnerable.

Instead, go to the margins, the communities of faith that were forged in the suffering of “social issues,” to the people whose identities were literally criminalized and demonized by church and state alike. You will find the fierce and fiery faith you are looking for.

But beware. The fire will cost you.

JAMIE ARPIN-RICCI, WINNIPEG
(LITTLE FLOWERS COMMUNITY)

Be in Touch

- Send letters to letters@canadianmennonite.org. Our mailing address is on page 3.
- Please keep it concise and respectful. Any substantial edits to letters will be done in consultation with the writer.
- If you have feedback not intended for publication, please contact editor@canadianmennonite.org or at 1-800-378-2524 ext 5.

/// Milestones

Deaths

Andres—Margaret Minnie (nee Kerber), 94 (b. Oct. 2, 1928; d. Jan. 31, 2023), Toronto United Mennonite.

Barker—William, 78 (b. Feb. 3, 1944; d. Jan. 20, 2023) Nith Valley Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.

Enns—Gerald, 99 (b. June 19, 1923; d. Jan. 6, 2023), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Fast—Vera (Suderman), 93 (b. Sept. 15, 1929; d. Feb. 7, 2023), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Froese—Erna, 91 (b. May 24, 1931; d. Jan. 15, 2023), Grace Mennonite, St. Catharines, Ont.

Janzen—Peter H., 91 (b. May 7, 1931; d. Jan. 21, 2023), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Janzen—Susanne (nee Siebert), 96 (b. Nov. 27, 1926; d. Jan. 22, 2023), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Loewen—Ken, 79 (b. Dec. 21, 1943; d. Feb. 1, 2023), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Penner—Bruno, 93 (b. May 28, 1929; d. Jan. 7, 2023), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Rempel—Ben, 96 (b. Aug. 14, 1926; d. Nov. 16, 2022), Grace Mennonite, St. Catharines, Ont.

Sawatzky—Mary, 91 (b. July 2, 1931; d. Jan. 24, 2023), Grace Mennonite, St. Catharines, Ont.

Willms—Mary, 95 (b. Sept 19, 1927; d. Jan. 17, 2023), Grace Mennonite, St. Catharines, Ont.

Woelk—Lawrence, 65 (b. Sept. 20, 1957; d. Jan. 21, 2023), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Voth—Walter, 94 (b. Nov. 21, 1928; d. Jan. 28, 2023), North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg.



Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones announcements within four months of the event. Please send 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

Camp really matters

Christine M. Epp

The smell of pancakes on the griddle, the roar of laughter while trying new activities, and the joyful noise of campfire singing are forever etched in my heart.

Summer camps and camp programming have long been a passion of mine. Although I didn't grow up as a die-hard camper, camp-related experiences in my childhood, youth and then as an adult, made it clear that camp had my heart. Special things happen at camp. Camp matters.

Fast forward some years and I find myself still deeply connected to camps. I know that my passion has everything to do with possibilities and relationships. I love the mentorship opportunities with staff and the impact on the campers, whether children, youth or adults. I love what camp does for families, volunteers and for our communities.

I have worked at several Mennonite camps, provided leadership at a camp exclusively for persons experiencing disabilities, and volunteered on many camp boards.

Now, I find myself as the liaison

between Mennonite Church Saskatchewan and an outside consulting firm on a camp study that began last year, a study that will serve the regional church into the future (see page 24). More than ever, it is the possibilities and the relationships that motivate my involvement.

MC Saskatchewan's council began exploring the benefits of having a deeper conversation about our three camps and the programs they run. There are assets to consider, as well as individual camp boards, executive directors, and teams of dedicated staff and volunteers. And there are those who attend these camps, some connected to our Mennonite churches and many who are not. As we waded through and then emerged from the pandemic, we asked many questions about the future of our camps. We saw the real challenges ahead. These issues and trends are not unique to our camps.

We were thankful to connect with a consulting firm that understood who we were and what our goals were.

And then the work of researching historical documents, identifying current

trends, interviews and consultations began. There were conversations and data to record and discern. Would themes emerge? What might they tell us?

What we continue to know for sure is that camps matter. We know camps are important to us as a faith community, and that passion for our camps runs very deep.

We are confident that there is much to celebrate, and so much we can learn from this process. What will we discover about how camping ministry will grow into the future?

Time will tell, as the process is not yet complete. For now, we are excited and grateful to dig deep into the wonders and miracles of summer camp. Young and old, camps matter to MC Sask. ❧



Christine Epp assisted with the recent MC Saskatchewan camp study.

For more on this camp study, see "The question of camps" on page 24.

A moment from yesterday



The Konferenz der Mennoniten in Canada—now Mennonite Church Canada—was formed in 1902. In 1928, the conference started publishing an official *Jahrbuch* (yearbook) which documented proceedings and decisions at the annual gatherings.

Starting in 1946, an increasing amount of *Jahrbuch* content appeared in English, rather than German. In 1965, the *Jahrbuch* became the *Yearbook*, though some German content continued to be included until 1978.

Some churches split over the language issue during the decades of German-English transition. While the *Yearbook* became English only, the conference did not abandon the German speakers; it continued to publish the periodical *Der Bote* until 2008.

To search the Yearbook collection, visit bit.ly/3lkLXZ7.

Text: Conrad Stoesz
Photo: Conrad Stoesz



archives.mhsc.ca

IN THE IMAGE

Dump truck affirmation

Ed Olfert

In this new-ish year, I find myself searching out new-ish challenges.

My youngest brother and I have been trading off shifts driving a dump truck in Saskatoon, which is still cleaning up after the great Christmas Day 2022 snowfall. It has been a delight to re-insert myself into the truck-driving culture, a culture that communicates with a language where only one sharp adjective can describe a shocking variety of nouns.

I have moved in and out of trucking culture most of my adult life, and am at peace there. I have relearned that, where heavy equipment is involved, walking within a stone's throw of said equipment results in your work gloves smelling of diesel for the rest of their natural lives. If you are as charmed by that as I am, perhaps there's a career shift ahead for you.

Besides income, another thing that draws me to this unique community is simply the way men relate in the workplace (there are no women in our workplace to this point). Out of a perhaps peculiar sense of spirituality, I occasionally insert a twist into the conversation around the time-clock in the shop as the crew gathers before our shift.

A young man stands beside me, smoking and drinking coffee as we wait for the rest of the gang to arrive. He is

the skid-loader operator on my crew, who is responsible for chasing after the heavy loader and trucks, scraping up any snow that has escaped us. I point out to him that I'm envious of his skill maneuvering his machine in tight quarters around heavy trucks. He is a very good operator.

My family culture has taught me that skilled operating of machinery is a highly valued quality, and is a reflection on the integrity of the operator. I see by his reaction that this is a highly unusual thing to say in this context. While the men are warm and supportive, offering direct affirmation calls forth a response perhaps not dissimilar to striking someone with that diesel-infused work glove. There is a look of shock, a slight bit of recoil.

Then my young man reacts warmly. After we exchange names, and I tell him I have a nephew with a similar and somewhat unusual name, he launches into a history of that name: what it means, how it describes him, what the Greek roots suggest.

I know that he is my new best friend when he later asks if my brother and I are twins. It's the highlight of my day. My brother is 10 years my junior.

Offering affirmation changes relation-

ships. This is a lesson that was driven home to me in decades of church ministry, decades of prison ministry, decades of relating to marginalized folks everywhere. Offering affirmation lightens conversations, lightens them to provide room for humour, which is always a fine addition to any communication.

In the Gospels, as the story is told of the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, the voice of God comes into the scene, offering affirmation: *"This is my child whom I love."* Although we are well versed in that event, the activity of offering affirmation to another has somehow been largely lost.

Certainly, in my growing years, I cannot recall hearing affirmation from my father, probably a reason why that relationship always felt complicated. Occasionally, we may step outside that unwritten rule, perhaps in a church context, but to offer affirmation as one person to another in the context of real life, is, in my experience, rare.

We are created holy. We are gifted beings. We bring unique gifts to every community, every relationship we are a part of. As my partner Holly often reminds me, "Say good things to each other before a funeral!"

We are children of God, beloved by God. Go forth and offer that to others. Including the skid-loader guy. ☿



Ed Olfert (p2peho@gmail.com) gives thanks for gifts offered to him.

Et cetera

Advertising Jesus

You didn't have to attend church on Super Bowl Sunday to be reminded that Jesus loves you. The "He Gets Us" campaign's Super Bowl commercials got the job done. Wealthy Christian boosters spent approximately \$27 million to promote Christianity on television's biggest stage. As religion fades in the U.S., the "He Gets Us" campaign hopes to counter divisive uses of religion. "We think Jesus is a big deal and we want to make a big deal out of it," campaign spokesperson Jason Vanderground told AP News.

Source: AP News

"Jesus was a refugee" hats are available—in English and Spanish—from hegetsus.com.



MIND AND SOUL

Beyond free speech

Randolph Haluza-DeLay

The fellows at the next table were running on and on about refugees. So many false statements! I gritted my teeth as I sipped my coffee that morning. “No!” I wanted to holler, millions of refugees were not going to overrun Canada. Then the fellows changed topics. It got worse. The new topic was climate change.

In particular, they were talking about billboards popping up in cities across Alberta. These ads, in my assessment, presented an erroneous theory as if it were scientifically accurate. The theory on the billboards had been thoroughly tested scientifically and failed. Yet, even as the funders of the billboard knew it was utterly faulty, they put up the billboards anyway. In my view, passing on falsehoods perverts effective discussion of an issue.

Staying for the rest of my coffee would give me problems with that small part of the body that the Book of James warns can set the world afire and corrupt the whole person. On the other hand, my professional work included published research on climate change, so I felt some need to stand up for the truth.

I put on my jacket to leave.

I cannot fathom why the loudest fellow at the next table decided to

comment on my departure. “Leaving, eh? You probably believe in climate change,” he said. I tried to explain that the theory on that billboard is just wrong; scientists have studied it and it just doesn’t hold up. In return, he actually blocked my way, vehemently declaring: “It’s free speech. Everyone’s got that right to say whatever they want.”

Now the devil had my tongue. Why didn’t I walk out instead of continuing? But instead, I said, “No one has a right to lie. That billboard is false advertising. That should never be protected by free speech.”

Yes, I confess here to you: “Telling the truth” did not bring blessings that day.

What is “free speech,” especially in the present societal context of dis- and mis-information? According to what I have been told, Buddhists have a set of principles for “right speech” that might help us think ethically about what and how we communicate.

The principles start with “Is it true?” If not, never say it. Not anywhere. Of course, there are debates about what is true and how we can know truth, but if something is patently wrong, or you aren’t sure, the principle should get us to question what we say.

The second principle asks, “Is this helpful?” What we say should bring

some greater good into the world or the lives of others.

“Is it necessary?” is a third principle. Does the thing need to be said? Again, some things may be frivolous but helpful, such as telling silly jokes. But I am also reminded of this principle in times of incessant scrolling of my smartphone.

Closely related is another principle: “Is this timely?” Can those with whom I am talking actually hear what I am trying to communicate? On the other hand, waiting indefinitely, or being told to wait for “the right time,” runs the risk of never saying what might be necessary to say and can even perpetuate injustices.

There are other useful principles too. But these can help our speech be nonviolent and peacemaking. It might have been “free speech” that morning, but all of us failed to practise “right speech.” Thank you for hearing my confession. I’ll try to do better. ☿



Randolph Haluza-DeLay lives in Toronto, where he tries, but often fails, to think before he speaks.

Et cetera



Winning prayer

A 2022 Associated Press-NORC poll found that nearly a third of Americans feel God and prayer play a role in determining which team wins a sporting event.

Source: AP News

Photo: Tammy Anthony Baker / Flickr

TALES FROM THE UNENDING STORY

A shielded sleep

Joshua Penfold

What keeps you up at night? Do the anxieties of your day taunt you as you lay awake?

I don't usually have much trouble falling asleep—my wife can attest to that—but sometimes if I wake up in the middle of the night my mind will start playing through something in life that I'm anxious about. During the day I keep myself busy or distracted, but lying there in the middle of the quiet night I struggle to escape the nagging thoughts. The embarrassing thing is that they are mostly pretty benign things.

As a fairly new homeowner, my not-so-handy-and-a-bit-ashamed-of-it mind gets caught in loops worrying that I didn't do the plumbing right and I'll come home one day to a flood, or that my electrical work was bad and, lying awake in bed, I can almost smell the smoke.

I sometimes worry about my parents or my kids. I worry about money and bills and the economy. With so many new things to learn in my new job, my mind gets into unhelpful loops trying to play out how future parts of my job might unfold. Lots of the common things that people worry about, right? Regardless of how low the objective magnitude of our anxieties may be, they

are subjectively significant to the person worrying about them, and at night they can feel inescapably and sleeplessly enormous and insurmountable.

In Psalm 3, the writer is surrounded by taunting enemies who rise up against them. The psalm is attributed to David when he flees from his son Absalom. Whether it was actually written by David, or simply attributed to him—see footnote below—the connection helps us get a sense of the peril the writer is in: Their life is in very real and serious danger.

Despite the obvious anxiety and significant stress such a situation would create, despite what would be a forgivable inability to remain calm, the writer rests in the comfort of God as their shield and simply says, *"I lie down and sleep. I awake, for the Lord has sustained me"* (Psalm 3:6 Alter). He makes it sound so easy.

I know that if I was on the run for my life, I would not be having a very restful sleep. And yet the writer's trust in God as rescuer and shield is so unflinching that, despite the chaos and uncertainty of the situation, sleeping is restorative rather than elusive. The psalmist certainly puts me to shame when it comes to anxiety control. I'm not sure

if the psalmist's sense of peace leaves me encouraged, inspired, jealous or frustrated. Maybe all of the above. I really should not struggle to fall asleep since most of my issues are comparably laughable.

Does your mind race at night? Do you struggle to sleep peacefully at night? May this psalm help us keep our worries in perspective. May we embrace the image of God as our shield, protecting us from the anxieties we face, no matter how large or small, realizing that God is rescuer and, like the psalmist, we can *"fear not from the myriads of troops that round about set against [us]"* (Psalm 3:6). Tonight, may you lie down and dream sweetly and peacefully knowing that God sustains you until you awake.

Footnote

The psalm says "A Psalm of David." That is one way to understand/translate what is written. It could also mean "by David" or "belonging to David," or even "in the manner of David." Scholar Robert Alter has chosen in his translation to maintain an inclusive kind of ambiguity and translate it "A David Psalm." I think I might translate it as "A Psalm in the key of David." ☞



Joshua Penfold
(penfoldjoshua@gmail.com) is the new outdoor education director at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp.

Et cetera

Blessings, apology coming from Church of England

On Feb. 9, the Church of England passed a motion that will permit their priests to bless the civil marriages of same-sex couples. The Church of England's national assembly, the General Synod, also agreed to apologize for the harm it has caused to LGBTQ+ people.

Source: guardian.com

Photo: Diliff / Wikipedia Commons



NEWS

Two Ohio families move to Ontario

By Barry Bergen
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

Two Ohio families with 300 years of history in the U.S. began to consider leaving America when the two brothers and their wives faced workplace transitions in 2021.

Ryan and Valerie Kauffman of Bellefontaine have three children, two in high school and one at Eastern Mennonite University, while Ryan's brother Rudi and Rudi's wife Ravonn of Bluffton have two daughters in high school. Both families ended up buying homes in Leamington, Ontario. Their parents Roger and Rachel Kauffman are presently in the process of moving to Canada.

There were many reasons that weighed into this decision. "Political polarization in the U.S. was among the factors contributing to the families' decision to move. "With a two-party political system," Ryan said, "you can get polarized quickly."

Another factor was the increasing gun violence. There was a local school shooting, and the brothers have lost two cousins to gun violence.

The couples looked at the situation around them and asked the question: "Where do we want our children to grow up?"

Seeing the amount of energy poured into politics in the States was also a factor.

Ryan, who is a family doctor, has seen many of his patients make agonizing, life-altering decisions because they did not have medial coverage. The difficulty of witnessing this contributed to his desire to move."

Leamington's size and proximity to Ohio (just across Lake Erie) made it a good place to look for a new home. Church life is important to the Kauffman families and, as they began searching for a new place to live in Canada, they also began searching for a new church home.

They began exploring Leamington United Mennonite Church via online services, eventually joining an online Bible study. They enjoyed the services and, when pandemic restrictions eased up and the



Kauffman family members (left to right): Roger and Rachel, Neil and Simon, Ryan and Valerie (parents of Neil and Simon).

border opened in December 2021, they came up for a visit.

Then they began looking for jobs. By the beginning of 2022, the families had decided to move. The couples had job interviews in April 2022, and both couples purchased homes in Leamington over the summer. They could not make the actual move until they received work permits. Rudi and Ravonn received theirs last November, while Ryan and Valerie had to wait until mid-December.

They have settled into life north of the border. Their highschool-aged children are adjusting to studies in Canada, and one son even found himself on the local highschool curling team.

"Within three weeks I had over 400 patients," Ryan said. Health care is one of the many differences between the two countries and, as a physician, he sees these differences up close. "In every country, health care is rationed differently," he said. "In the U.S., if you have money, you can get any amount of care. Here in Canada, care is rationed by waiting. Everyone is in the same line and receives the same care, but everyone waits for it."

In their experience, Canada is also much more welcoming to foreigners. Valerie said, "Diversity is much more accepted here. Different cultural holidays are on the school calendar."

Differences across the border also emerge in the churches. Mennonite Church U.S.A. congregations struggle with the political polarization happening all around them.

"The way you choose to read the Bible comes from the way you are politically focused," Ryan said. "Those who focus on Jesus' radical call for inclusion are in conflict with those who focus on purity, to the point where seeing the other's point of view becomes very near impossible."

The Kauffmans are happy to be in Canada, although moving has pushed them to view things in new ways. They are no longer members of a nation that throws its weight around in the world arena. In Canada, that is not part of the equation.

"As Christians, we say our allegiance is to Christ," Ryan said. "This is challenged wherever we live, but Canada seemed like a better fit in which to live out our faith." ❧

Langley church supports Indigenous school art project

By Amy Rinner Waddell
B.C. Correspondent

Three panels with images of bears, butterflies, salmon and eagles grace the central hallway of Uplands Elementary School in Langley, B.C. Part of a joint project by the school and Langley Mennonite Fellowship (LMF), the panels were created by Elinor Atkins of the Kwantlen First Nation.

Atkins spent three days as artist-in-residence at the school last year, painting the panels and answering questions from students about her journey as an artist and what it means to be Indigenous.

She presented her work publicly at a school ceremony on Jan. 25, explaining the various animals depicted on the panels:

- **The bear** represents strength, family and love;
- **Butterflies represent** growth, change, transformation and hope;
- **Salmon swimming upstream to spawn**, represent resiliency, strength and tenacity; and
- **The eagle** in flight represents taking people's prayers, hopes and wishes to the Creator.

Helga Goetzke, a Langley church member who teaches at the school, helped spearhead the project together with Tina Maphoso, an Uplands Aboriginal support worker. Atkins was paid from the LMF Indigenous Relations Reconciliation Fund.

"Aboriginal program staff and students, both from Uplands as well as from other schools in the district, led a honouring ceremony for Elinor Atkins," said Goetzke.

On behalf of the school, Maphoso thanked LMF representatives "for this gift that has resulted in beautiful art that will remind us of stories and lives that connected for a few moments, and shifted thinking for longer."

Henry Krause of LMF said the project was intended to be "a sign of hope for all children to live fully into good relations, learning together about our past and building a

good future grounded in understanding, respect and justice." ❧



PHOTO COURTESY OF HENRY KRAUSE

Pastor Ian Funk stands next to art at Uplands Elementary School.

People and Events

New board chair for MennoMedia



Chris Steingart

MennoMedia announced this month that **Chris Steingart** will be its new board chair, and Nelson Okanya the vice-chair. Steingart is a web and graphic designer from Kitchener, Ont. He replaces Lee Schmucker. Okanya of Lancaster, Pa., has previously worked as a pastor and president of Eastern Mennonite Missions.

The changes take effect on July 1.

MennoMedia, which includes Herald Press, is the publishing house of Mennonite Church Canada and MC U.S.A. It sold \$2.9 million worth of books, hymnals and other resources last year.

MC Canada Joint Council update

The governing body of Mennonite Church Canada met for its quarterly meeting on Jan. 28. While no major decisions were made by Joint Council, it finalized the revised Covenant (commonword.ca/go/3334), and Operating Agreement

(commonword.ca/go/3029), which define the relationship between MC Canada and the five regional churches.

The council also discussed the Mennonite World Conference Fair Share Agreement that stipulates expected giving from national church bodies. Some initial discussion of a strategic plan also took place.

Joint Council is made up of the moderators of the regional churches and one appointee made by each region. It meets twice annually in-person and twice online. The next meeting will be held from May 6 to 7 in Saskatoon.

Maria and the Mennos set to air in September

New sitcom tells story of Mennonite-Filipino family dynamics

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent

The story of a young Filipina woman who marries into a Mennonite family and moves in with her in-laws will soon be broadcast on screens across Canada. *Maria and the Mennos* is a Manitoba-made television show that depicts the interaction of these different cultures and the hilarity, frustration and joy that ensues. The show is currently filming in Manitoba and will premiere in September.

Mennonites and Filipinos are two of the largest communities in Manitoba. The province is home to the largest concentration of Filipinos, per capita, outside of the Philippines. It also hosts 39 Mennonite Church Manitoba congregations and dozens of other Mennonite churches.

Yet the diverse stories of these Manitoban communities are rarely portrayed on television, says Tina Fehr Kehler, one of the show's three creators. "There's this idea that either you don't know anything about Mennonites or you have this image of horse and buggy in southern Ontario or . . . colonies in South America," she says.

Fehr Kehler comes to the show from Winkler, Man., with a master's degree in Low German-speaking Mennonite studies and more than a decade running Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Manitoba's Low German program, helping Low German-speaking Mennonites with immigration and integration supports.

Co-creator Hazel Wallace is very familiar with being boxed in by stereotypes. "Usually what you see on screen is not Filipinos being strong lead roles," she says. "We're the nurse, or nerd, or funny sidekick, or ethnically ambiguous third best friend in a trio. Being a Filipina actress and growing up watching TV, it's really difficult to see yourself and feel connected to what's represented on screen."

Wallace was surprised by how many



PHOTO BY PAUL PLETT

Kenton Dyck and Victoria Exconde play lead roles in *Maria and the Mennos*.

more similarities Mennonites and Filipinos shared than she expected. She jokes that adding water to the shampoo bottles to make them last longer is one of them.

"Whenever you're talking about different cultures," Fehr Kehler says, "it's not just about what the differences are, but what is our common human sameness, so when we see the other we don't 'other' them, but we're all one family."

The team of creators, which also includes Winnipegger Paul Plett, director of Ode Productions and maker of the well-known film, *I Am a Mennonite*, agreed they all wanted the show to be a progressive one that challenges and moves beyond stereotypes.

They made the main character, a Filipina woman, a fashion designer instead of a nurse. The Mennonite family, instead of wearing clothes that set them apart from the rest of society and having conservative views, are in line with progressive, modern ideas in the society around them.

"I think this story is so important

to put out because it puts on screens voices we don't usually see [in] that light," Wallace says. The 21-year-old has been acting since she was 15. She grew up in a biracial household and knows how difficult navigating two cultures can be.

Both Wallace and Fehr Kehler have worked with Plett on previous video projects and, when he approached them about this story, they were enthusiastic. The three began meeting frequently in October 2021, creating the premise, building the characters, developing the storyline, and then wrote the show together over nine months.

They were joined by writer and actor Alec Carlos, who brings to the project his own experience of being born in the Philippines and growing up in Steinbach. Numerous others, including executive producer Orlando Braun of Prairie Boy Productions, make up the approximately 50-person cast and crew.

The lead actors are Victoria Exconde of Winnipeg; Kenton Dyck of Steinbach; Chuck Fefchak of Morden; and Erna Peters, originally from Winkler, where the show is set.

"There is so much Filipino talent in Winnipeg and so much Mennonite talent here," Wallace says, adding how important it is to produce content with Manitoba crews and casts.

The 13 episodes are filmed mainly at one house in Winnipeg. Additional filming will take place around Winkler, at an MCC thrift shop and a barn; and in Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship's church building in Winnipeg.

The show will air on YesTV—a Christian broadcaster in southern Ontario—and its streaming service. The team is working to air it in Manitoba through a local broadcaster. ☞

MCC responds to earthquakes in Syria

Mennonite Central Committee

When an earthquake of 7.8-magnitude, followed hours later by a 7.5-magnitude quake, struck northwestern Syria and southeastern Türkiye* on Feb. 6, it dealt a devastating blow in Syrian communities already suffering from years of conflict.

As the tragic toll continues to unfold in Syria, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is working with long-term partners in Aleppo and surrounding areas to meet urgent needs.

“We are only beginning to see the enormity of this disaster,” says Garry Mayhew, who, along with his wife Kate, are MCC representatives for Lebanon, Syria and Iraq.

“The sheer numbers of lives lost, injured and displaced are overwhelming, and numbers will continue to grow in the days ahead,” he says. As of press time, the Syrian death toll had topped 5,800.

Many buildings came down in the quake, MCC partners in Syria are reporting. Hundreds of aftershocks have added to damage and trauma, and cold weather is worsening rescue efforts and survivors’ struggles.

MCC is responding in Aleppo and surrounding areas by working with partners that are opening shelter centres in churches and community buildings, and providing emergency food, shelter, hygiene, sanitation supplies and trauma counselling.

“Many of our partners have been involved with relief work for the last 12 years of the Syrian war. This has allowed them to quickly pivot to supporting those who are displaced by the earthquake,” Mayhew says.

But the needs are immense.

“It is critical that we stand with those who are suffering at this time,” he says.

Many Syrians feel forgotten by the world after so many years of suffering. We must help them know that they are not forgotten, that we see their pain and stand with them.”

In addition to meeting immediate needs, MCC will be working with partners to determine longer-term projects and responses.

In Canada, donations can be made online at mcccanada.ca/earthquake or by calling 1-888-622-6337 toll-free. In Canada, MCC has joined the Humanitarian Coalition appeal for Türkiye & Syria. MCC is a member of the coalition through the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. ✎

**MCC is using the spelling of Türkiye that the country has requested the international community use and that the UN and Canadian and American governments are using.*



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE FRANCISCAN CHURCH IN ALEPPO

Collapsed buildings following the earthquakes in Aleppo, Syria, on Feb. 6.

Disrupting common images of disability

By Farah Jurdi
Conrad Grebel University College
WATERLOO, ONT.

The intersection of disability and religion was the topic of this year's Rodney and Lorna Sawatsky Visiting Scholar Lecture and other related events at Conrad Grebel University College in early February.

Darla Schumm, associate provost and professor of religious studies at Hollins University in Virginia, who is visually impaired, delivered the 2023 Sawatsky Lecture entitled "The power of misfitting: Disrupting sinner, saint, and Super Crip controlling images." Using Patricia Hill-Collins's concept of controlling images, or negative stereotypes, Schumm prompted reflection about how religious communities perpetuate, produce and reinforce the idea that people with disabilities are inferior.

"If your faith was stronger, you would be healed," is often said by those who view people with disabilities as sinners, according to Schumm. This is perpetuated by the Christian Gospel, as Jesus often heals people from illness and disability. Disability is then interpreted as something that must be cured, instead of something to be celebrated. Her lecture further discussed how to interpret the narrative in a more empowering way.

Contrastingly, people with disabilities who have strong faith are seen as saints, or heroic sufferers. This feeds into a paradoxical identity for people with disabilities, Schumm said, viewing them as being heroic and inspiring, but simultaneously needing pity and care because of their suffering.

The sense of inspiration is shared with the image of a Super Crip. "The non-disabled world is saturated with these stories that focus on disabled people overcoming our disabilities, which reinforces the superiority of the non-disabled body and mind," she said. "They turn individual

disabled people who are simply leading their lives into symbols of inspiration."

In turn, the problem of accessibility is then located within the individual. Schumm relocated the problem to the global community by proposing the concept of "misfitting," effectively eroding the "us-them" dichotomy. "Sometimes I 'misfit,' sometimes you 'misfit'—it

equals the playing field. None of us fit in every situation," she said.

For example, a lecture with complex language may pose a challenge for university students with cognitive impairments. This accessibility issue can be solved by using simpler language to adjust the environment, she said.

"Misfitting," according to Schumm, is simply an incompatibility between the world and the body that is solvable by accommodations in order to make daily life more accessible for everyone.

"'Misfitting' is not suffering," she concluded. Instead, it is "an opportunity to work collectively to find a better fit." ❧

To watch the complete lecture, visit <https://bit.ly/3YJqnMm>.



GREBEL PHOTO BY JENNIFER KONKLE

Darla Schumm spoke at the Sawatsky Lecture at Grebel, while her husband, Jonathan Harris, described images and text on the screen, and service dog Toby waited patiently.



WATERLOO NORTH MENNONITE CHURCH PHOTO

Sara Cressman, pictured, created a 'Common Time' banner that was presented to Waterloo North Mennonite Church, in Waterloo, Ont., on Feb. 5. The vine and leaves represent several parts of the church: green being the main colour for the Ordinary Time of the church liturgical calendar; vines that connect all the pieces together and represents the church; and leaves of different fabrics that bring depth and beauty to the banner, as do the many individuals that form the church congregation.

NOTICE

52nd Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service Annual Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the members of the Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service (CMPS) for the year ending December 31, 2022, is scheduled for **May 13 at 4:00 p.m. PT by Zoom.**

CMPS is the non-profit corporation that publishes *Canadian Mennonite*. The agenda includes receiving reports from the board of directors, the 2022 financial statements, and election of new directors. The meeting is public. Voting is limited to CMPS members (individuals who donated at least \$25 in 2022 and who register in advance), and board members who represent the regional and nationwide Mennonite Church.

The board of directors includes:

- **MC Canada:** Henry Krause (British Columbia), Annika Krause (Quebec), Aaron Penner (Manitoba)
- **MC British Columbia:** Eun Young Kwon
- **MC Alberta:** Arthur Koop
- **MC Saskatchewan:** Alex Thiessen
- **MC Manitoba:** Ken Reddig
- **MC Eastern Canada:** Karen Heese
- **Elected by CMPS:** Lois Epp (Alberta), Kathryn Lymburner (Ontario)

To register as a member for the annual meeting, please email office@canadianmennonite.org by **April 29, 2023** noting "**CMPS annual meeting**" in the subject line.

The annual report and audited financial statements will be posted at www.canadianmennonite.org, after the meeting.



Invite AMBS

faculty and staff to speak at your church or event!

Virtual presentations are available.

See [ambss.ca/invite](https://www.ambss.ca/invite) for a broad list of possible topics.



The question of camps

MC Saskatchewan wrestles with the future of its camps

By Emily Summach
Saskatchewan Correspondent

“People used to work at camp because it was the right thing to do. They’d say things like: ‘I’d work 18-hour days, was paid very little, never got breaks, took care of kids and had the best time of my life, it was great!’ But that’s less motivating now.”

These are the words of Tim Nickel, a Saskatoon-based consultant hired by Mennonite Church Saskatchewan to perform a months-long, in-depth study of its three camps: Camp Elim, Camp Shekinah and the Youth Farm Bible Camp.

Terry Stephaniuk, MC Saskatchewan’s moderator, emphasizes that there was “no agenda” attached to this study; it was simply an opportunity to learn more about the camps, and gather feedback

from constituents to help guide decisions and future planning. MC Saskatchewan approved \$25,000 for the study although the final cost is not known yet.

The framework of the study has four main parts:

- **Nickel performed** an organizational review of each camp;
- **Held a stakeholder analysis** with the key informants of the camps;
- **Talked to** other camps in the area to learn how they are organized, funded, and governed; and
- **Hosted community** conversations with MC Saskatchewan congregation members.

Finally, Nickel will offer a discernment presentation to MC Saskatchewan Council.

“I’ve been talking to tons of people about these camps, and with tons of MC Saskatchewan people,” he says. “While each camp is governed by its own board, MC Saskatchewan owns the camps. The camps are huge assets with a huge impact, but that also means huge liabilities.”

Five community conversations were held; three in-person events and two online events. At each conversation, Nickel presented an in-depth history of each camp, including their revenue streams and governance structure, as well as unique features and challenges. Those attending the conversations were given a chance to



SUPERB MENNONITE CHURCH / MENNOITE HERITAGE ARCHIVES PHOTO

Members of Superb Mennonite Church gather for a meal at Camp Shekinah in 1987.

FOCUS ON CAMPS

ask questions, offer feedback, and share their own stories of how the camps have impacted their lives.

Nickel says that the study thus far has shown that “people still feel a moral obligation towards our camps. It’s a matter of identity, there’s an ownership piece in this. A real sense of identity lies at MC Saskatchewan with the camps . . . [but] there’s a tension though. The question of ‘Does the constituency identify with the camps as a whole, or is it individual camp loyalty?’”

As the landscape of the Mennonite church changes across Canada, this inevitably impacts Mennonite camping ministries. The camps were originally created to help with Anabaptist faith formation in children and youth.

One historical account of the camps that Nickel came across said that the camps served “to impress upon the youth that the grass isn’t greener in other places.” At present, only 25 percent to 30 percent of kids attending camps are from MC Saskatchewan churches; most campers are not and many don’t attend church at all.

All three of the camps have stable revenue streams at present, but drawing young adults to work at camps for the summer is a significant challenge. Aging congregations have fewer and fewer kids to send to camp, which impacts the camper-to-counsellor-in-training-to staff pipeline, says Nickel. Still, people at the community conversations shared about the personal impact that camps had on their lives.

One person said, “We get these non-church kids for a week. We want to be very careful to give them love and God.”

Another said: “Parents have a right to share their faith, and a child has the right to autonomy. Camp might be a place for kids to be loved and accepted for who they are. It’s a very redeeming opportunity.”

Still, the big question hanging in the air was verbalized by Armin Krahn at one of the consultations: “Saskatchewan is too small to have three camps, so what do you do?”

Nickel offered four options of how the regional church could move forward with its camps:

- **It could** own and operate the camps, and employ the staff;
- **It could** own the camps, but delegate

governance and operations to the individual camp boards;

- **It could** contract and lease out governance to an outside organization, such as One Hope Canada, but maintain ownership; or
- **It could** sell the camp properties, and then rent or sell them back to the individual camp boards.

The MC Saskatchewan council will consider these options when Nickel presents his findings.

“MC Saskatchewan is ultimately in charge of the camps, which is so much responsibility,” Nickel says. “Does MC Saskatchewan have the ability to do this well? There’s a real tension between ‘oh, it’s just camp, it’s a good thing’ versus so much responsibility and the need to mitigate risk. There are no easy answers, and yet the status quo is just as hard.”



MC SASKATCHEWAN PHOTO/TEXT BY EMILY SUMMACH

Youth and leaders from five MC Saskatchewan congregations enjoyed a winter retreat at Camp Shekinah this past January.

FOCUS ON CAMPS

‘More of a home than my actual home’

Willowgrove Inc.
BANCROFT, ONT.

Along, long time ago—way back in 1955—Fraser Lake Camp was born in the hearts and minds of three Mennonite pastors: Emerson McDowell, John H. Hess and Glen Brubacher.

Their vision was to provide a life-changing, rural camping experience for urban kids. The hope was that even one week of camp could leave a child with such a feeling of acceptance that their lives—by proxy, their communities—would be forever changed.

This was very much true for Melissa Parkhurst, who now serves as Fraser Lake’s director. “When I began my role in December of 2022, it truly felt like coming home. I had to pinch myself and thank God for the chance to serve my community in this role,” she says.

Parkhurst, who served at Fraser Lake for many summers, attributes her own sense of self-confidence and leadership to having

worked at camp, a large reason why she wanted to return. “Every time we conduct staff interviews, I try to remain focused on this ‘life changing’ goal . . . on how to develop our leaders and programs in ways that foster this sense of community and belonging,” she says

As with many camp communities, much of Fraser Lake’s staffing base is comprised of past campers: young people who want to give back to the community for accepting them, and for positively shaping their lives. This leadership cycle is incredibly valuable to the camp’s culture, especially given the diversity of its campers.

Today, it’s estimated that approximately 25 percent of Fraser Lake’s campers come from marginalized groups, including children living within the Foster Care or Children’s Aid systems; campers with special needs or who require additional behavioural supports; or simply kids from

low-income communities.

Many of these campers are sponsored by Fraser Lake’s Hand-in-Hand Subsidy Program. Every year, the camp collects donations to support families facing financial barriers, and ensure that kids can experience a life-changing summer regardless of their home situation. Because these young people grow up to become leaders themselves, this helps to ensure that the staff reflect the diversity of their campers.

Often, Hand-in-Hand donations are accompanied by messages. One standout from 2022 was a small donation, with a big note. It read: “This camp has always been more of a home to me than my actual home.” There simply is not a better sentence to capture the life-changing impacts of Fraser Lake Camp. ✎



PHOTO BY SHADRACK JACKMAN-MCKENZIE

Three 2022 Fraser Lake Camp staffers, from left to right—Edlyn Laneva, Zoe Suderman and Gaille Cineus—perform for the campers.

FOCUS ON CAMPS

'A camp cabin is a messy thing'

By Ellie Cressman with Thomas Beech

Silver Lake Mennonite Camp

SAUBLE BEACH, ONT.

When thinking of the word “faith,” Silver Lake comes directly to mind. Camp provides me with the space to integrate faith into daily life. Campfire songs, morning and evening reflections, and sessions are all valuable parts of camp that invite faith-based reflection.

From being a camper to a counsellor-in-leadership-training, to a staff member, my faith journey has been rooted at Silver Lake. Ever since I was a young camper, I valued the strong community, beautiful nature and safe environment I found at camp. These elements encouraged me to engage in meaningful reflection and discussion with campers and staff of various ages and experiences.

Last summer, I conducted a nature session that incorporated a guided walk throughout the camp, stopping at certain areas to reflect on various stories and Bible

passages. I was amazed by the insightful reflections the campers shared, and I realized that I was learning as well as guiding.

Hearing their various thoughts grounded me. Camp has taught me to keep my heart and mind open, and that listening is vital for growth. At Silver Lake, we listen to different people’s perspectives and open ourselves to nature, which allows us to listen to God.

Silver Lake is, at its core, about relationships. It’s about being with each other authentically and meeting each person you interact with on an entirely human level. Camp forces you to build relationships organically, simply being and doing alongside others. You have no choice but to sacrifice for others, learn across differences, and recognize the dignity of those around you.

A camp cabin is a messy thing. With a group of people living alongside one another for a week, there are bound to be numerous challenges, lots of conflicts and surely a healthy dose of chaos. This is not a knock on Silver Lake, but maybe its greatest asset. Life is messy, and following God is messy, and being at Silver Lake reminds you of how beautiful that is.

A camp cabin is also a profoundly joyful thing. Everywhere you look, there are smiles, friendship, acts of kindness and unbridled excitement. The best in each person is brought out through the authentic relationships they form with those around them. Camp exposes the deeply human in each of us, in all its messiness, richness and beauty. At camp, you are plunged head-first into the complexity of divine humanity. ❧



SILVER LAKE PHOTO

Shirley John, an Indigenous elder, enjoys strawberries with Silver Lake staff.

FOCUS ON CAMPS

Camp and mental health

By Janet Peters
Camps with Meaning
MANITOBA

The summer of 2022 was a re-opening in a multitude of ways. After two summers in various states of restrictions, we were able to be together in all of our spaces and to provide a full spring and summer of camp programs.

After spending most of our time with family members and close friends, we were

able to step out and explore some independence and a larger circle of people. And after a long and snowy Manitoba winter, we were free to put away the scarves and embrace the warmth and humidity of the summer.

But all of this re-opening brought some challenges. It was difficult to let go of the

fear and anxiety we had lived with, and the expansion into more places and more people brought out some new anxieties as well.

Homesick campers are always a reality at camp, but last year brought us more and older campers for whom being away from home was a struggle. We also saw more campers and staff coming to camp with varying levels of anxiety and mental-health concerns, with some weeks feeling especially heavy and difficult.

This was the reality of summer 2022. And the reality was also that being at camp was really, really good for us. We relearned how to live in community with more than just our families. We made new friends and tried new things. We were able to sing and worship together fully, making so much joyful noise to God. We played and we challenged ourselves and each other to grow and learn and become. We shared our faith and the love of God, and we built community every week. We supported and encouraged each other.

The re-opening was difficult and it was beautiful. Summer 2022 was hard and it was rewarding. As much as we struggled with our mental health, we also experienced healing and built resilience. While coming to camp may not have been as easy as in the past, the time spent at camp made things a little brighter and a little better.

We continue to invite campers and staff to spend time at camp; to unplug from everyday routines; to connect to God, creation and each other; and to grow in body, mind and spirit. ☸

Janet Peters is the associate program director of Mennonite Church Manitoba's Camps with Meaning program. Walks outdoors, good books, baking and time with family and friends are some of the strategies she uses to maintain her own mental health.



MC MANITOBA PHOTO BY DARRYL NEUSTAEDTER BARG

Campers enjoy the water and sun at Camp Koinonia.

AN UNFORGETTABLE SUMMER CAMP EXPERIENCE

OMMC is an exciting summer opportunity for youth who have completed Gr 6-12, pairing exceptional musical instruction with traditional camp activities!

grebel.ca/ommc



FOCUS ON CAMPS

Connecting with faith at camp

By Emily Taylor
Hidden Acres Camp
NEW HAMBURG, ONT.



that aspect of my life, spending the summer learning about faith has left me curious about what place God has in my life, and has inspired me to seek out the answer to that question after the summer was over.

“My time at Hidden Acres is something I wouldn’t trade for anything, and the opportunity to come back for even one week of future summers is something I hope I’m blessed with again.” ❧

HIDDEN ACRES MENNONITE
CAMP PHOTO

Fun at Hidden Acres.

Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp was excited to celebrate 60 years of camp over the past season. It was a season of seeing new things that the Lord is doing, and reflecting on all that he has done over the past 60 years.

When I reflect back on the summer, there is an overall feeling of gratefulness. In particular, I think of staff who connected with faith for the first time, and the lasting impact that camp’s ministry has had on their lives.

J.B., a cabin leader, reflects on their time at camp: “My experience at Hidden Acres is one that will stay with me for the rest of my life. Having the opportunity to be part of this community of staff who work so hard to provide campers with an environment where they can make new friends and be their genuine self is one that I will be eternally grateful for.

“I remember the nervous feelings I had going into my first week of camp. But after getting a chance to get to know my campers, I knew that this is where I was meant to be.

“Camp has done more for my own personal growth than I can ever imagine. If someone told my high-school self that I would be performing while dressed up as a grandma, or singing worship songs, I would’ve thought they were lying. But being part of a staff team always working to uplift each other helped me come out of my own shell.

“Camp has helped me learn much more about myself and has also helped me begin reconnecting with my own faith. After spending so many years feeling disconnected from

**MENNONITE
CAMPING
ASSOCIATION**




CAMPS | RETREATS | OUTDOOR EDUCATION



- BRITISH COLUMBIA**
Camp Squeah
- ALBERTA**
Camp Valaqua
- MANITOBA**
Camps with Meaning
Camp Assiniboia
Camp Koinonia
- ONTARIO**
Hidden Acres Mennonite
Camp & Retreat Centre

WWW.MENNONITECAMPING.ORG


Promotional Supplement



MDiv Connect

Complete your **Master of Divinity** degree right where you live.

amsbs.ca/MDivConnect

 Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary



THE COLLABORATIVE
MBA

Leadership for the common good
Apply now for fall 2023

 CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY cmu.ca/mba



COLUMBIA BIBLE COLLEGE

EXPLORE YOUR CALLING

[COLUMBIABC.EDU](https://columbiabc.edu)

Schools Directory



BOOK YOUR TOUR TODAY!

Grades 7-12
admissions@rockway.ca
www.rockway.ca



 GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY

Master of Arts
Concentration in Christian Ministry
Concentration in Theological Studies

Master of Divinity
Graduate Certificate in Christian Studies

 CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY **Apply now:**
cmu.ca/gstm



APPLY NOW grebel.ca/futurestudents



Learn | Serve | Lead
Whole-person education preparing young people for a life of purpose

umei.ca

Integrating sound academic learning with growth in character, faith and service to God.

MSCS
MENNO SIMONS CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

AN EDUCATION 4LIFE

483.531.8742 | 7869 Edison Drive SW Calgary, AB T2H 4Y7 | www.mennoschool.ca




Find your place. Find it together. Find it here.

westgatemennonite.ca 204-775-7111

 CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY



Where teaching is exceptional

Small university
Big opportunities

cmu.ca/admissions 

MENNONITE COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE

EDUCATION rooted IN FAITH.



[MCIBLUES.NET](https://mciblues.net)



 rjc.sk.ca
306.232.4222

IMAGINE | THRIVE | EXPLORE | BELONG

Kindergarten Registration NOW OPEN



WINNIPEG Mennonite
Elementary & Middle Schools



APPLY ONLINE
[WMEMS.CA/APPLY](https://wmems.ca/apply)

Calendar

British Columbia

April 21-23: MC B.C. youth impact retreat, at Camp Squeah, Hope.

May 6: MC B.C. women's day.

May 21: MC B.C. arts fundraiser for Indigenous relations, at Heritage Hall, Vancouver.

Alberta

March 17-18: "Hope, trust, transition": MC Alberta annual delegate sessions, at Springridge Mennonite Church, Pincher Creek.

April 22: MC Alberta all committee meeting, at Bergthal Mennonite Church, Didsbury.

Saskatchewan

March 11: MC Sask annual delegate sessions at Bethany Manor, Saskatoon. For details and to register, go to mcsask.ca/event/8602.

March 17: Shekinah rib night fundraiser, St. Patrick's Day edition. For more information go to shekinah.ca.

Manitoba

March 17: "An evening with Steve Bell" fundraiser in support of Jamie and Kim Arpin-Ricci, directors of Peace and Justice Initiatives and pastors of Little Flowers Community in Winnipeg; at Douglas Mennonite, at 7:30 p.m.

March 19: "The Power of Conversation," an afternoon of sharing music and stories about conversation, featuring the Mennonite Community Orchestra and CMU student Anna Schwarz, at Winnipeg's Lutheran Church of the Cross, at 3 p.m.

March 28: CMU open house at 10:00 a.m. with come-and-go guided tours at the campus. Register at cmu.ca/future/experience.

March 29: CMU virtual open house, online at 6:00 p.m. Register at cmu.ca/future/experience.

April 7: The choir of First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, and orchestra, under the direction of Yuri Klaz, present's Faure's "Requiem," at the church, at 7 p.m.

April 26: CMU virtual open house, online at 6:00 p.m. Register

at cmu.ca/future/experience.

July 14-15: The Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies and the University of Manitoba present "The Russlaender Mennonites: War dislocation and new beginnings" centenary conference to mark the arrival of Russlaender from the Soviet Union to Canada.

July 15: "Singing our Journey: Sangerfest 2023," at the Manitoba Centennial Concert Hall. Sign up to sing in the mass choir celebrating the centenary of the Russlaender immigration to Canada. For more information, visit mhsc.ca/soj.

Ontario

March 9-11: MCC Ontario presents "Rooted in right relationship: With one another and creation," a peace and justice student seminar, in Ottawa. For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/3Wzxcu>.

March 18: Conrad Grebel University College and the University of Waterloo March break open house for prospective students. Learn more at grebel.ca/events.

April 1: Menno Singers presents "Rachmaninov's Vespers," at Trillium Lutheran, Waterloo, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit www.mennosingers.com.

April 18: MC Eastern Canada presents "Living the Gospel as a diverse group of believers," an online workshop on cultural integration, from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Learn more at mcec.ca/events.

April 26: Soli Deo Gloria Singers present a concert at Leamington United Mennonite Church, at 3 p.m.

April 28-29: MC Eastern Canada annual church gathering, at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, in English and French. Learn more at mcec.ca/events.

May 5: Menno Singers presents its "Spring Concert," at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit www.mennosingers.com.

May 11: MC Eastern Canada presents "Becoming a restorative church: Embodying our safe church policy." A hybrid event, in English and French, at 50 Kent Avenue, Kitchener, and on Zoom, from 7 to 9 p.m. Learn more at mcec.ca/events.

June 3: MC Eastern Canada presents

"Being a restorative church: Creating brave and accessible space." A hybrid event, at Shantz Mennonite Church, Baden, with French on Zoom, from 8:30 a.m. to noon. Learn more at mcec.ca/events.

Online

March 8: Canadian Mennonite online event, 8 p.m. EST on Zoom. "Are we too progressive for our own good?" with Aaron Epp, Ryan Dueck, Peter Haresnape and Cynthia Wallace. Register at canadianmennonite.org/events.

Classifieds

Employment Opportunities



Director of Finance

Reporting to the Vice-President, Administration and Finance, the Director of Finance leads the Finance Department and takes primary responsibility for the university's financial operations.

This important leadership role oversees financial reporting, monitoring the effectiveness of financial systems and controls, ensuring regulatory and tax compliance, and administering the annual budget process.

Full position description and other details at cmu.ca/employment.

Applications and/or nominations should be sent to: Director of Human Resources, hrdirector@cmu.ca
Canadian Mennonite University | 500 Shaftesbury Blvd.
Winnipeg, MB, R3P 2N2, Canada

March 17: Mennonite World Conference online prayer hour, 10 a.m. EST. Register at mwc-cmm.org/OPHmar23.

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 visit, canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar.



Upcoming Advertising Dates

Issue Date

March 13

March 27 *Focus on the Arts*

April 10

Ads Due

Feb. 27

March 13

March 27



CAMP VALAQUA PHOTO

Since 1958, Camp Valaqua has nourished body and soul. Located an hour northwest of Calgary, Valaqua offers camp programs for kids aged 7 to 17 in July and August, as well as rentals for churches, schools and small groups the rest of the year.