

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

March 24, 2023 Volume 27 Number 6



## Risen

### INSIDE

- Chickadee as sacrament 12
- Vietnam church strong, dynamic 19
- From Aleppo 22

# No shortcut to Easter

WILL BRAUN

editor@canadianmennonite.org



It's not easy to come up with fresh, new material for Easter, so we dug up something nearly 500 years old instead. We're putting the "Menno" in *Canadian Mennonite*, literally—the original Menno. And while most of us are not accustomed to someone admonishing us to die to the carnal self, perhaps in our time of soul-smothering digital distraction and spiritually vacuous consumer excess, Menno Simons' call to mortify the flesh and rise with Christ (page 4) will sound fresh and new in its own way.

I find Simons' heavy-handed talk of sin and his seeming body-soul duality unsavoury, but I also figure someone willing to take the risks he took is probably worthy of attention.

After Simons' words on the "spiritual resurrection" we share 10 short accounts of favourite Easter memories, images and wonderings. Much gratitude to those who contributed. I'll add my own here.

While visiting El Salvador in 2003, I saw many murals of the martyred Archbishop Oscar Romero, especially in villages and small towns. Romero, once part of the nation's elite, was ultimately shot at the altar for challenging the principalities and powers, and standing with the peasants.

One thing I love about Romero is that not only did he publicly and repeatedly call the rich and violent to repent before God, but he also called on guerrillas and activists to seek not only temporal

change but always, also, transformation of heart and soul. The gospel he preached was firmly rooted in the physical realities of the nation, and it was thoroughly of Spirit ("There can be no liberation until people are freed from sin").

In one of the more common Romero quotes painted on buildings, he says: "As a Christian, I do not believe in death without resurrection. If they kill me, I will rise again in the Salvadoran people."

Days later, on March 24, 1980, he was killed, like numerous other clergy, nuns and peasants before and after him. The murals I saw around the country attest to the fact that his life, in a very real sense, continued on.

Romero did not stop the civil war or upend the temporal structures of power, but in his story we see there is that which bullets cannot kill, something of Spirit that is victorious over death.

Those murals are one Easter image I hold to.

For me, the story of Romero connects also with Kevin Barkowsky's column on page 10 in which he notes that Mennonites "are willing to suffer for [Jesus]."

Fresh back from a trip to Asia, Barkowsky is not talking metaphorically. Like Romero, like Menno Simons, like many other early Anabaptists, our sisters and brothers in other parts of the world today take real risks and endure real consequences for their faith. Surely it is a profound grasp of the power of resurrection that gives them the courage to walk the narrow path that leads to Easter.

When I spoke last year to Desalegn Abebe, head of the Mennonite church in Ethiopia, he said peace is, "Not a work, not a project, not something we do; it is something we live for and something we should die for." Another time, he said, "it's now time to stand firm with truth, to speak it out, even die for it."

Menno Simons would not have flinched at such a statement, but it certainly gave me pause. Those words stay with me. Surely people who willingly face harm know Easter in a way I do not.

Let us give thanks for the witness of courage past and present; let us ask God to grant continued courage to believers around the world who live risky faith; and let us entreat God to grant us a measure of resurrection courage.

## By way of introduction

Last issue I noted that we hired Madalene Arias as Eastern Canada correspondent. On page 16, she shares the remarkable story of her and her family.

## Correction

At the end of Carol Penner's article about freedom and sin in the March 13 issue we provided an incorrect url for her website, which includes her Lenten confessional prayers. The url is [leadinginworship.com](http://leadinginworship.com). Our apology. ☺



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# CONTENTS

March 24, 2023 / Vol. 27, No. 6

## ABOUT THE COVER

This cross—of typical Salvadoran style—was purchased in La Palma, El Salvador, in 2003. Neither the artisan nor seller are marked on it.

PHOTO: WILL BRAUN

## At your service

New CM correspondent **Madalene Arias** tells her story—one marked by courageous women and defiant seniors.

16

## COVID accelerated global church growth

**Emily Summach** interviews Jeanette Hanson about her recent trip overseas to churches in Asia.

18

## From Aleppo

**Meghan Mast** interviews Petra Antoun, an MCC worker in Aleppo, Syria, about the recent earthquakes.

22

## AGM season

CM correspondents report on annual meetings of regional churches in Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

15, 24

## The spiritual resurrection

4

The two-part Easter feature includes 500-year-old wisdom from Menno Simons and 10 present-day mini-reflections.



## Regular features:

For discussion 5 Readers write 8 Milestones 9  
A moment from yesterday 10 Schools Directory 29  
Calendar 30 Classifieds 31

**What is a Mennonite?** Kevin Barkowsky 10

**Gentleness behind bars** Ed Olfert 11

**Chickadee as sacrament** Randolph Haluza-DeLay 12

**Within a shadow of doubt** Joshua Penfold 13

# 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**

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**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

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## FEATURE

# The spiritual resurrection

To die and rise in Christ

By Menno Simons c.1536

Art by Nick Schuurman(therainthesnowtheseed.ca)



*Reading words written nearly 500 years ago and translated nearly 70 years ago takes some effort, especially when the message is that death precedes resurrection. We trust the Spirit will reveal something new in the old.*

**A**wake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. The Scriptures teach two resurrections, namely, a bodily resurrection from the dead at the last day, and a spiritual resurrection from sin and death to a new life and a change of heart. That a person should mortify and bury the body of sin

and rise again to a life of righteousness in God is plainly taught in all of the Scriptures. Paul admonishes saying, Put off concerning the former conversation the old person which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, that ye put on the new person, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. . . .

[T]here can be no resurrection from sin and death unless this body of sin be first destroyed and buried and have sensibly endured pain and the burden of sin, that is, penitence and remorse on account of sin, as is evident from the Scriptures. David says, O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath . . . [f]or mine iniquities are gone over my head. . . .

Paul says, Ye were made sorry after a godly manner, to repentance, for godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation. . . .

Behold, so we must die with Christ unto sin, if we would be made alive with Him. For none can rejoice with Christ unless they first suffer with Him. For this is a sure word, says Paul, If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him.

This resurrection includes the new creature, the spiritual birth and sanctification, without which no one shall see the Lord. This Paul testifies in a word saying . . . If anyone be in Christ, they are a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. . . .

We must spend the remainder of our days not after the lusts of men, but according to the will of God, so that we may say with Paul, I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. . . .

For Christ has expressly portrayed Himself in His Word, that is, as to the nature which He would have us understand, grasp and follow and emulate . . . So Christ is everywhere represented to us as humble, meek, merciful, just, holy, wise, spiritual, long-suffering, patient, peaceable, lovely, obedient, and good. . . .

All regenerate children of God are thus minded and affected, for they take after Him who has begotten them. . . . Then when they have conformed to the image of God and have been born of God and also abide in God, they do not sin, for the seed of God remains in them; and they have overcome the world. They are crucified to the world, and the world unto them; they have

mortified their flesh and have buried their sinful body with Christ in baptism, with its lusts and desires, and now no longer serve sin unto unrighteousness, but much more righteousness unto sanctification. . . .

And if they receive a wound, surprised by their enemies, their souls remain uninjured and the wound is not unto death, for they have the anointing of God. They have the true Samaritan and the true physician with them, who can bind up and heal their wounds, for He has compassion over our weakness and frailty. Through His stripes and wounds we are healed.

**So also all** those who find in examining themselves that they are not after their first birth according to the flesh regenerated and renewed in mind, understanding, spirit, and disposition, but are still altogether carnal, earthly, worldly and devilishly minded . . . let these humble themselves before God with Jeremiah saying: Let us examine and prove our ways, and let us turn unto the Lord; let us lift our hands and hearts to God in heaven and say, We have sinned before heaven and in thy sight. . . . Let them humbly entreat Him for His Spirit . . . Let them continue in

prayer and in their desires to God till they are clothed with the power of the Spirit from on high, remade and renewed in the spirit of their mind, and in astonishment say: This is the change wrought by the right hand of God, the most High.

**May the God** of all grace who will in the last resurrection gather the elect into His eternal kingdom grant us such hearts, minds, and dispositions that we, through true faith, and denial of self, may so deny and renounce ourselves that we may have part in the first resurrection of which we have spoken . . . This resurrection consists solely in dying unto, mortifying and burying the sinful body through putting off and mortifying the old life and in being raised and renewed unto a new and pious conversation. Amen. ❧

*Adapted from The Complete Writings of Menno Simons, copyright © 1974, pages 53-61. Adapted and used with permission of Herald Press. All rights reserved. To purchase, visit [CommonWord.ca](http://CommonWord.ca) or [HeraldPress.com](http://HeraldPress.com).*



### /// For discussion

1. What do you think Menno Simons means when he says, “[t]here can be no resurrection from sin and death unless this body of sin be first destroyed and buried”? What needs to be buried? What is the role of suffering in this?
2. Our lives are saturated with advertising that appeals to our carnal, fleshly desires for excess. What might it mean to mortify and bury the sinful body in this context?
3. Have Christians tended to over-emphasize spiritual bodies over physical bodies?
4. What has been your experience of “spiritual birth” or becoming a “new creature”?
5. What are the resurrections for which you praise God this Easter season?

—CM Staff

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## Easter reflections

We asked 10 people for their most meaningful Easter memory, or an image that best captures the essence of Easter, or what Easter makes them wonder.

### Holy Week turtle soup

When I lived in the Colombian community of Mampujan, I was part of planning a commemorative event to mark 12 years of displacement. Armed groups had forcibly displaced the community right around the time of Holy Week, so for our commemorative event we included a traditional Holy Week meal involving turtle soup. The soup was meant to be a surprise, so members of the planning group secretly stored live turtles in backyards around the community.

Mampujan was also the first community in Colombia to receive a court order for reparations, so hopes were high that a date for reparations, or even reparations themselves, would be announced by government officials.

Sadly, there were no reparations and the meal was a disaster, as clandestinely buried turtles were dying before they could make it into the pot.

Two weeks later, a friend excitedly called me to her backyard. A turtle must have laid eggs and two baby turtles had hatched. I clung to that resurrection image and was thrilled to be part of the moment when, about a year later, community members lined up to be the first people in Colombian history to get reparation cheques.

I keep a photo of one of those baby turtles above my desk as a reminder to pay attention to resurrection.

—Anna Vogt, Ottawa

### Sweet goodness

My neighbour, one street over in our



PHOTO BY ANNA VOGT

*An Easter turtle in Mampujan, Colombia.*

small town, will open his deck door and blow an air horn every time the Chicago Blackhawks score a goal during the NHL playoffs. It wasn't until this had happened many times that I finally connected the noise with the playoffs. On Easter Sunday morning, I have taken to going outside, as the sun is cresting the horizon, and shouting "Jesus is alive! Sweet goodness!"

In those five words there is joyous hope for me and all of creation that our redeemer has come to reconcile, restore, renew and redeem all of this. I wonder, however, who might hear this proclamation and put together "Jesus is alive" and "Sweet goodness."

What does Jesus being alive even mean to a world that is flooded with bunnies and Easter eggs? How might sweet, good news of Jesus being alive sound to people who have experienced the church as a place of intense focus on correct beliefs and proper behaviour? What might it take for the risen Jesus to be received as sweet goodness in the

hearts of all who happen to hear our proclamations and testimony?

—Andrew Wiens, Winnipegosis, Man.

### Good Friday disconnect

I began attending a Mennonite church almost 20 years ago. I had been raised and educated as a Roman Catholic theologian, but reached a point where I was no longer able to live within Catholicism's steadfast patriarchy. I felt incredibly welcome in my new church community, and I felt no theological disconnect with our worship services—until Good Friday.

The leader that morning asked the congregation to turn and kneel with our arms rested on our chairs. That meant congregants needed to turn their backs on the beautiful cross behind our altar. I was shocked and distressed: turning backs to the cross—on Good Friday of all days—seemed to me to spurn the solemnity of the service. After all, we were there to remember the death of Jesus of Nazareth, a man who loved (and was loved by) his family and friends, who gathered a group of disciples, who travelled throughout the region preaching and healing, and who spoke of God and the afterlife in new ways.

The joyous miracle of Jesus' resurrection is a miracle beyond our imaginations. But I wonder how fully we can grasp the resurrection without first absorbing the whole impact of Jesus' death. I wonder how Easter Sunday can be enriched by focusing first on the gift of Good Friday.

—Ginny Freeman, Waterloo, Ont.

### Huddled at dawn

My most meaningful Easter memory covers many of the Easters I have experienced in my six-plus decades of life: the sunrise service. From the time I was a teenager, I have been attending sunrise services. This involved:

- **Getting up** early to drive to the site in the dark so we could experience the sunrise together;
- **The camaraderie** of being together to celebrate Christ's resurrection with the traditional greeting of "Christ is risen,"



and response, “He is risen indeed!”; and

- **Huddling together** in the cold and holding the music for our intrepid guitarist who accompanied our singing with bare fingers while we all shivered around a fire that just wasn’t quite warm enough.

Prior to COVID-19, our church would invite the sunrise service participants to church after the service for a breakfast of Paska, sometimes with a bonus of the wonderful spread. Unfortunately, it’s been a few years since we’ve had a sunrise service, and Easter doesn’t quite feel the same.  
—*Gerhard Epp, Winnipeg*

### Surprise

Easter resurrection came unexpectedly to the Metis community of Manigotagan, Man., on the east shore of Lake Winnipeg when my family lived there. My husband Neill and I led an active Sunday School program. With Lent approaching, we decided on a project that would get the children more involved leading up to Easter. The first week of Lent we challenged three boys to go into the deep snow across the road from the chapel and find a dead branch with several “arms.” Another group went to the nearby shed to get some rocks. The rest of the children wondered what was going on, and several noticed the empty pail on the stage.

The branch the boys found was “planted” in the pail—no water, no soil, just a dead branch propped up in the pail. The rocks were used to keep it upright.

Each week the children attached a colourful symbol and a Scripture verse to the branch. The dead Lenten branch became a focal point each Sunday as the children showed their parents what they had been doing.

On Easter morning everyone had a big surprise. The branch was no longer dead, it was alive with many buds! No one was more surprised than Neill and I! It was an Easter miracle that helped emphasize the message of resurrection.  
—*Edith von Gunten, Winnipeg*

### Peace entombed

Easter makes me wonder about possibilities. Who would have thought that Jesus would rise from the dead? Who could have even imagined? This gives me hope that we can imagine new ways of living in community with each other, and creative ways of addressing conflict and violence.

Who says we have to follow the world’s rules of war planes, tanks and bombs? Justice and peace may, in fact, be waiting in the tomb, ready for resurrection. I wonder what that will look like and I wonder when it will come, but for now, I will continue to roll away the stone with all my might.  
—*Hannah Redekop, Community Peacemaker Teams, Amman, Jordan*

### Touched by light

I grew up in the Bergthal Mennonite Church, outside Carstairs, Alta. When I was in youth, one of the activities was an Easter Sunday sunrise service. We had several places we could use for the services, but my favourite one was held in our summer cattle pasture. There is a grove of diamond willow trees, and a quiet clearing inside. My dad went out to set up bales and dig a fire pit. The service was led by the youth, but everyone was invited. We gathered in the early hours around the fire, huddled together in the dark and cold. It was always a bit hushed, and then there would be a story, singing, scriptures and prayer, and then the best part: the sun would start to rise. The first hint of colour would creep into the east, then it would go from dark to light and it was a moment of complete and utter joy. Right away it felt warmer as the sun touched us. The hope of the day ahead and meaning of it dawned on us, Christ is risen!

—*Joani Neufeldt, Lethbridge, Alta.*

### Confession and love

Easter of my childhood was marked by extended family gatherings and joyful church services. Now, in fear and trembling, I must confess I wonder whether the resurrection is essential to my faith, which has been evolving for decades. I have been examining each of

the components of what it means to be a Christian, to make my life in God my own and not just the faith of my fathers. I have more questions than ever, but still I feel lured and pursued to relate with the God who is the greatest love.  
—*Wendy Suddaby, Victoria, B.C.*

### Echoes of new life

The Easter memories that keep surfacing for me are stories that echo the new life and great joy of Easter. One was the week before Easter, when a church member who’d experienced a fall and brain bleed passed the “cookie test” and could eat solid food again, thereby relying less on a feeding tube. That individual was also able to move back home that week. Having walked with the family, it was a joyous week and a joy to be able to share that good news with the congregation Easter morning. Christ is risen!

The second story happened during the Easter season, when I lived near Cleveland, Ohio. The whole city erupted in joy at the escape of Amanda Berry, Michelle Wright and Gina DeJesus, who had been kidnapped a decade earlier. The unimaginable had happened. Those taken and feared dead, were alive!  
—*Rachel Siemens, Edmonton*

### The face of Easter

I recall an Easter children’s time in worship. One of us portrayed Simon Peter and put the kids under a blanket to feel the dark and sadness at Jesus’ death. After a time, “Mary Magdalene” came running in from the back shouting with joy, “He is alive! He is alive!” Simon Peter was duly scolded for hiding under the blanket with the children. “Mary” grabbed the blanket (which had been strategically sewn with Velcro) and ripped it off the kids to let in the light. “He’s alive! Come and see!” Mary shouted, and we all ran to the back where we handed out daffodils. I still recall the feeling of joy that washed over me as I ripped off the blanket and looked at all those beautiful faces.  
—*Lois Siemens, Saskatoon* ❧

## OPINION

### Be in Touch

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- 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](mailto:editor@canadianmennonite.org) or at 1-800-378-2524 ext 5.

### /// Readers write

#### ✉ Alvin Baroro



On page 6 of the Feb. 13 issue is a picture mentioning two people's names and identifying another as "an Indigenous coffee grower." Please do better than that and offer all equal dignity by making the effort of having all the names.

HAROLD PENNER, ARNAUD, MAN.  
(ARNAUD MENNONITE CHURCH)

*Editor's note: Good point. His name is Alvin Baroro. May God bless him and his community.*

#### ✉ F-35 letter to Trudeau

The photograph on the front cover of your magazine (the F-35 fighter jet on the Jan. 30 issue) prompted me to write the following letter [excerpted].

Dear Justin Trudeau:

Fortunately I did not have to pay much tax for 2021. Certainly I have no intention of contributing to the purchase of such a deadly weapon [as the F-35 jets].

As an attender at the Meeting of the Society of Friends (Quakers) I affirm the Peace Testimony. We are called to live "in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars" [George Fox, 1650]. War and the preparation for war are inconsistent with the spirit of Christ. . . .

HEATHER WHEAT, PETERBOROUGH, ONT.

#### ✉ Thanks, Ryan Dueck

Thank you, Ryan Dueck, for provoking us to reflect anew on the spiritual state of our Mennonite congregations. Your article ("To set a soul aflame," Jan. 30) recalls the vigorous discussion of *The Anabaptist Vision* a few decades ago and its pastoral impact on one or two generations of Mennonite leaders.

Notably, Dueck's article scares some who have experienced exclusion by the church, and rattles others who had to unlearn their guilt-induced, or subjectively manipulated, fundamentalist Mennonite experience to embrace Christian faith. Harold Bender's *Anabaptist Vision* allowed a generation to unlearn in the name of "authentic" Anabaptism and Christianity.

Thank you for quoting Brad East's blog; he is no theological slouch. His blog article cites Stanley Hauerwas positively—a name very familiar to so-called progressive Mennonites. Hauerwas is a pacifist theologian and a close student of Mennonitism. He consistently challenges old forms of Christianity, including liberalism or religion as therapy.

Also, East's piece does not use the words "progressive," "left" or "right," or "aging white liberals," as Dueck does in his summary. Those categories are problematic, and in my humble opinion will not foster good Mennonite conversation on these critical questions.

That said, it is time to pick up the conversation.  
ARNOLD NEUFELDT-FAST, STOUFFVILLE, ONT  
(COMMUNITY MENNONITE CHURCH)

#### ✉ Military 'service' questioned

The Focus on Education article entitled "Service through art" (Feb. 13) contributed by Menno Simons Christian School (MSCS) has huge implications for education, peace theory and the concept of Mennonitism. The key word in the title, "service," fosters the current secular myth that soldiers, presumably of all nations, and often on opposite sides, serve people by killing each other.

The artist featured mentions, "the sacrifices of hundreds of Canadian soldiers who fought for keeping peace in South Korea." This illogical idea that soldiers, of any stripe, fought and died for "freedom" or "peace" seems to go unchallenged in our public schools, but when it also goes unchallenged in a school which features the names of Menno Simons and Christ, a fresh discussion of peace theory is necessary.

The soldiers on both sides of the Korean conflict believed their cause was just. One would think that, at a Christian school, that concept would be countered by Jesus' prime teaching to love enemies.

In the same issue of *CM* one letter basically implies that in light of Russian aggression fighting back is necessary. If that view is the case, then we have chosen Barabbas as our example and not Jesus. Freedom and peace don't depend on



weaponry and killing others. They depend on clear education and the daily grind and true sacrifice of peace working without any particular cause or goal. One grain of sand at a time, it works. History shows that the alternative is destruction because violence just breeds more violence.

Maybe the staff of MSCS could present to students the history of pacifism and examples of many people who chose peace by being conscientious objectors or dedicating their lives to peace work.

PETER VOTH, AJAX, ONT.

(TORONTO UNITED MENNONITE CHURCH)

### ✉ On the musical fence

**Re: “The piano ban,”** (March 13): I might be riding the fence, but I see the value in both sides [worship with instruments and without]. I was adopted into a Mennonite home. Although I have never had lessons, God has given me the gift of music. I play half a dozen instruments. In my teens dad told me he wouldn’t join the conservative churches while I lived at home, as he felt it would be wrong to stop a God-given gift.

However, to this day I prefer to go to churches with a cappella singing. The four-part harmony is one of the most glorious instruments to hear and participate in.

There is a danger in what one generation allows in moderation the next allows to excess. It saddens me to return to church that brought in “just a piano” and 30 years later they have such loud drums and keyboards in their praise and worship teams that I walk out with a headache. I believe instruments are wonderful in the right time and place, but should accompany the singing, not overpower it.

STEPHANIE KAUFFMAN, PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE, MAN.

(ONLINE COMMENT)

### ✉ Insular

**Re: Joon Park’s** March 13 column “Goodbye ‘model minority’”: An insightful commentary with its painful reminder of our insular tendencies. I grieve at your daughters’ experience and recognize that they are not alone.

KEN BECHTEL (ONLINE COMMENT)



## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Friesen**—Redden Walker and Piper Malia (b. Feb. 23, 2023), to Mike and Nicole Friesen, Altona Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Wiens**—Max Daniel Olfert (b. Jan. 12, 2023), to Jill and Curtis Wiens, Aberdeen Mennonite, Sask.

### Deaths

**Bauman**—Maynard, 90 (b. Jan. 26, 1933; d. Feb. 4, 2023), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

**Byrd**—Gary, 85 (b. Dec. 12, 1937; d. Jan. 26, 2023) Poole Mennonite, Ont.

**Driedger**—Susie (Hildebrandt), 95 (b. Sept. 26, 1927; d. Feb. 26, 2023), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

**Dyck**—Maria (nee Siebert), 97 (b. June 5, 1925; d. Feb. 9, 2023), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

**Harms**—Harry, 90 (d. Dec. 14, 2022), Waterloo North Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

**Janzen**—Peter, 68 (b. June 18, 1954; d. Feb. 10, 2023), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

**Joy**—Shirley Anne Jerusha (nee Manke), 73 (b. March 1, 1949; d. Feb. 14, 2023), Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

**Pauls**—Dorothy (Sawatzky), 95 (b. Aug. 1, 1927; d. March 6, 2023), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Shantz**—Larry, 71 (b. March 20, 1951; d. Feb. 22, 2023), Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

**Toews**—Shirley, 85 (b. March 13, 1937; d. Feb. 28, 2023; Altona Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Wagler**—Mabel, 92 (b. Jan. 28, 1931; d. Jan. 24, 2023), Poole Mennonite, Ont.

Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones announcements within four months of the event. Please send Milestones announcements by e-mail to [milestones@canadianmennonite.org](mailto: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

# What is a Mennonite?

Kevin Barkowsky

Last month I was sleeping in my hotel in Vietnam when loud karaoke music started playing outside. The music was so loud that I thought my window was open, so I turned the lights on to check, but no, the window was closed. I put my earplugs in, put my pillow over my head and fell back to sleep.

The next night the same thing happened. I began to wonder if Vietnam's cultural preference for loud music would reflect in their Mennonite churches as well. After all, in Colombia the Mennonite churches were loud, and the worship music at the Mennonite World Conference assembly in Indonesia was loud too. True to form, Evangelical Mennonite Church Vietnam worship was loud.

In Romans, the Apostle Paul is explaining the gigantic change that had happened in the world through Christ. The ethnic followers of God were having difficulty adjusting to all the changes. It used to be that Israel was the vessel of God, but now, instead of 12 tribes of

Israel, it was 12 disciples of Jesus. Instead of Israel's temple of stone holding all the tools for worshipping God, the temple of the Holy Spirit was now in the hearts of believers.

It used to be that Israel held the identity markers of who was in and out with God. But now, instead of lineage, circumcision and last name determining if you are in or out, it was Romans 10:9: *"If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."*

I learned a mic-dropping statistic in Vietnam: 84 percent of the world's Mennonites do not live in Europe/North America, and do not worship in English. In general, European and North American churches are shrinking, while Mennonite churches elsewhere—the loud ones—are growing. Like Paul's letter to the Romans, these are epic changes, and the percentage will only continue to grow.

This change is significant. If we accept the change, it means that when

someone asks me if three of my grandparents' last names, "Regier, Friesen and Doerksen," are Mennonite, the new answer is no. If my last name was Choi, Pham, Hoajaca or Abebe, then I could say yes, my name is Mennonite.

Same with the food I eat. Are rollkuchen, watermelon and farmer's sausage Mennonite food. No, but kimchi, tacos, pho, nasi goreng and injera are.

We, like the early Christians in Rome receiving Paul's letter, face a massive change. We in Canada are the ones who need to put on our servant and student shoes. We need to learn to listen, even if it means finding some good earplugs.

What is a Mennonite? Mennonites are loud and charismatic; most speak Vietnamese, Amharic or Spanish; love Jesus; and are willing to suffer for him. That is what a Mennonite is. ❧



Kevin Barkowsky is Mennonite Church B.C.'s interim executive minister and church engagement minister.

## A moment from yesterday



Gilbert Snider stokes his wood-fed, maple-syrup evaporator in rural Waterloo County in 1954. The photographer, David L. Hunsberger, took many photos of working life in Ontario's Waterloo Region. How much do you know about the working lives of your fellow churchgoers?

Text: Laureen Harder-Gissing  
Photo: David L. Hunsberger /  
Mennonite Archives of Ontario



archives.mhsc.ca

## IN THE IMAGE

## Gentleness behind bars

Ed Olfert

**O**n Thursday mornings, I drive an hour north to the Saskatchewan Penitentiary, a federal institution in Prince Albert.

I am escorted through the belly of the beast to the chapel area. Inmates begin to arrive. I am there, at the chaplain's request, in support of a program geared towards healing injured spirits. It feels like an advanced course, not one to offer men only recently arrived, who may be restless, defensive or angry. No, this program asks for defensive postures to be lowered.

Someone has turned the chairs around so we meet in the rear of the room. That's where the video equipment is. Somehow, that feels significant. This course is not overtly Christian. It is designed to comfortably fold into whatever expression of spirituality the guys bring.

On one day, we see a video focused on the inner child. The presenter in the video, Robin Casarjiran, does a fine job of encouraging her hearers to engage their wounded inner child in a manner that feels non-threatening. Over and over again, the guys are reminded: "Be gentle with yourself."

Another video is about anger, another addresses the hard topic of forgiveness.

Always, the message is about compassion. "If you find opening that door is simply too frightening," says Casarjiran, "then gently close it again. But affirm yourself for having approached that door, and know that when you're ready, you will go there again."

In 35 years of relating to offenders, I've glimpsed the power of offering blessing into lives that have received shockingly little positive affirmation. It makes both the time and expense spent to be present on Thursdays seem like a bargain. Vulnerable ones everywhere live within a greater measure of peace when broken people are blessed.

Something else happens on those Thursday mornings; I encounter the Christ.

Certainly, I encounter the Christ on a Sunday morning in my usual pew. That is also a warm place to be, a time when it's good to be gentle with ourselves and with each other. Perhaps there are also limitations.

When worship begins with announcements, then a prayer, then one or two familiar hymns, a sharing time and on down through the order, this is not bad worship. It is good.

But consider this. By the time we have experienced that version of worship

twice, or a hundred times, perhaps blinders are sliding up beside our faces. A thought creeps in, perhaps, that encounters of God are connected to this order, this language, this place. And perhaps, with those blinders, we miss less traditional holy encounters.

Perhaps that's why facing backwards at Sask Pen feels so exciting. There isn't God language, unless the guys choose to use it. There aren't expectations that guys will respond in this way or that. There aren't right answers. There is simply a freedom to be.

After the video, the guys are invited to respond how they wish. The conversation is bright, hopeful.

One man, possibly with brain cells damaged from lifelong addictions, rambles on at length. His narrative is certainly affirming, but he circles round and round, starting and ending in places that just don't connect for me.

Another sums up that day's video, and warmly includes the words of the previous speaker as proof that this was indeed a holy lesson.

In decades of leading adult discussions, I have fielded many comments from "out there" and have struggled to bring them into a useful context. That Thursday, the Christ was present and showed me the way.



*Ed Olfert (p2peho@gmail.com) gives thanks for holiness lived.*

## Et cetera



## Alt-right excommunication considered

**Matthew Harrison, president of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, says "white nationalists" who promote "alt-right" views on social media and disrupt local congregations with online threats should be excommunicated if efforts to work with them and seek their repentance do not succeed.**

Source: Religion News Service

Photo: Matthew Harrison



## MIND AND SOUL

# Chickadee as sacrament

Randolph Haluza-DeLay

Normally I hearken closely to the words of Jesus. But although he advises that we consider the sparrows of the field, I'd rather pay attention to chickadees.

Being commonplace seems to be no barrier to the joy chickadees bring to many. Chickadees live across the entirety of the southern half of Canada and all the rest of the North American continent, even through the Canadian winters. Five of the seven species breed in Canada, but the black-capped chickadee is the most well known. They even reside in the human-dominated, urban environs in which most of us humans also live. Nevertheless, since none even pass through Palestine, Jesus was probably right to pick a bird family that was more globally distributed.

Chickadees are also special in that other similarly small songbirds gather with them. The chickadee has an alarm call alerting all to the presence of predators. Every birder knows how to make the “pishing” that attracts these mixed species flocks. For other birds, the value of hanging around chickadees is that, if one can see the danger, the danger is lessened. The flock is safer for everyone.

Lessons from these facts could be

applied to us: Flock together and help each other out. Pay attention to the gifts of others who are not quite like yourself. The common is still special.

The Bible is full of such lessons-by-analogy. But I want to take it farther. Chickadees are not mere object lessons. I see them as sacraments.

In her poetry collection, *What the Chickadee Knows*, Margaret Noodin—who writes in Anishinaabemowin and English—observes, “The marsh chickadee is there in the white pine / calling out... / it's a ceremony, a way to be alive.”

In other words, the chickadee and its calls are directly honouring the Creator. In Indigenous worldviews, spiritual and physical are intimately connected. More than overlapping, the spiritual world is the physical world, and vice versa. Ceremony is a way of re-enacting this relationship. For Noodin, the chickadee is ceremony. The closest we can come in Christian thinking is the concept of sacramentality.

I reckon that most Mennonites think of “sacraments” as signs or symbols pointing towards God. Other Christian traditions, such as Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, believe that, in the sacraments, God is really present, albeit

in some mysterious way.

“Sacramentality” is wider than specific church practices. It means a worldview—nay, a way of being—in which God is “really present” in the world and not just spoken about. In a chapter on sacraments in the book *Sharing Peace: Mennonites and Catholics in Conversation*, Anabaptist systematic theologian Thomas Finger brings the two Christian traditions together. Theologies of “sacraments” are based on “the mysterious manner in which God has used the agents of his creation for his self-communication,” he writes. Reality itself is sacramental, he adds.

Finger continues to explain: Because God is immanent in all creation (The Spirit hovers over the waters, in Christ all things hold together), all Christians have this sense of sacramentality, regardless of whether we name two, five or seven official “sacraments.” God’s deliberate and ongoing “communication of divine invisible, spiritual grace through creaturely, visible, material channels” is the active, ongoing action.

Sacramentality is the lived reality that the physical and spiritual are inseparable. Thus, the chickadee is a sacrament. It is ceremony. Ponder that the next time one lands on your bird feeder. The divine is communicating with you. ❧



*Randolph Haluza-DeLay is a former outdoor educator who wonders what referring to “the chickadee people” would do to our ways of relating to God.*

## Et cetera



## Religious buildings destroyed in Ukraine

According to a recent report of the Ukrainian Institute for Religious Freedom, “at least 494 religious buildings, theological institutions and sacred places were wholly destroyed, damaged or looted by the Russian military” during the course of the invasion of Ukraine.

Source: Institute for Religious Freedom

Photo: spoilt.exile flickr.com

## TALES FROM THE UNENDING STORY

# Within a shadow of doubt

Joshua Penfold

I have so inextricably linked Psalm 22 to the words of Jesus on the cross that I don't think I have ever really read the Psalm in its own light before.

Yes, Jesus quoted "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me*" (Psalm 22:1) on the cross, and there are quite incredible messianic parallels throughout the psalm that the gospels draw upon, from pierced hands and feet to villains dividing his clothes and casting lots for them. But what if the shadow of the cross prevents me from seeing and appreciating the psalm in its own light?

This psalm is honest about feelings of doubt, abandonment and suffering, while simultaneously expressing hope, trust and remembering God's faithfulness. It's a paradoxical tension of feeling abandoned and swallowed up, while also forcing yourself to continue to trust, because you know you do even though right now you don't.

This resonates with me. I know the good things God has done and is doing; and I see the goodness of God around me, even while I also, in the same breath, express my doubt and sometimes wonder how I have been hoodwinked into trusting this invisible invention. I feel like the double-minded man the Book of James warns against

(James 1:6-8), but I also feel like the man who says, "*Lord I believe, help my unbelief*" (Mark 9:24).

Our ever-shrinking world can be an overwhelming myriad of ideas and beliefs. Jesus says, "*Seek and you shall find.*" If you're looking for evidence to point toward God's existence, there is plenty there. If you want to find reasons to reject God's existence, there is plenty there. I suppose there are many reasons to believe or doubt, but I was brought up with a worldview that assumes God exists, and mostly I have found this a very healthy and hopeful place from which to live.

Psalm 22 doesn't actually question the existence of God; it questions the action or involvement of God. The psalmist doesn't ask, "Is there a God?" but believes there is and cries out, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*"

Whenever I struggle with whether I believe God exists, I'm actually struggling from within a worldview where God does exist. I, like the psalmist, somewhat ironically bring my unbelief to the very God I'm not believing in. I can't seem to get away from my belief, even in my unbelief, and for that I am thankful.

The church has not always made it

easy to keep faith in Jesus. Too often, we have lost our way, done as much harm as good, and many have lost faith in the church and Jesus. I, too, sometimes struggle with the church and all its tragic failings. Yet, like Peter, I say to Jesus when asked if I'm going to also leave like the others, "*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know you are the Holy One of God*" (John 6:68).

I don't keep the faith because of the church, because of my upbringing or because of my education. I keep my faith, even when I doubt and feel like I've lost it, because the person of Jesus is so compelling that I can't turn away. Even though I constantly flounder in following his way, I just can't bear to turn away.

I guess no matter what I do and how I try to wrestle with scripture, I can't seem to escape the shadow of the cross, and I'm glad for it. ☿



Joshua Penfold ([penfold.joshua@gmail.com](mailto:penfold.joshua@gmail.com)) is wonderfully wowed when wrestling with the written word.

## Et cetera

### Canadian views on Ukraine

Fifty-five percent of Canadians polled by the Angus Reid Institute say Ukraine should continue to fight Russian troops. Only 23 percent believe Ukraine should negotiate instead. Fifty-two percent support Canada sending defensive weapons to Ukraine (down 9 points since March 2022) while 37 percent support sending lethal aid (down 11 points). Only 18 percent of Canadians have donated to Ukrainian assistance programs in recent months, but 75 percent believe Canada should extend its policy of accepting an unlimited number of Ukrainian immigrants, allowing them to stay for three years.

Source: Angus Reid Institute  
Photo: UNDP Ukraine flickr.com



## VIEWPOINTS

# Ten insights from CM's latest online event

Aaron Epp  
Senior Writer

**“A**re we too progressive for our own good?” That was the title of an online panel discussion *Canadian Mennonite* hosted on March 8.

More than 70 people tuned in to hear from the panel, which included Ryan Dueck, pastor of Lethbridge (Alta.) Mennonite Church; Cynthia Wallace, an English professor and member of the Backyard Church in Saskatoon; and Peter Haresnape, pastor of Toronto United Mennonite Church.

Dueck (RD), Wallace (CW) and Haresnape (PH) explored what sets faith-based justice and advocacy apart from secular causes, and whether or not Canadian Mennonites are missing spiritual depth.

Here are 10 insights from the discussion:

**“For me to be part of a Mennonite Anabaptist congregation which affirms my full humanity** and which blesses my marriage, which has space for queer and genderqueer individuals, is amazing. It is ‘a hard-work miracle,’ to borrow a phrase I heard recently, and most of the time it’s dull. We have meetings, and we have potlucks, and we pray together, and we have disagreements, and it’s all small, and yet somehow it participates in this greater beautiful conversation—that conversation and disagreement that God is spurring in the world in God’s attempts to call us into a deeper relationship, into a truer understanding of who we are.”—PH

**“If faith is just a job to do for Jesus, and not a mercy that comes crashing upon us** in the darkest, hardest, most painful moments of our lives, then I was just increasingly thinking that I don’t want it then.”—RD

**“Sometimes our imaginations get so**



*Clockwise from bottom left, Ryan Dueck, Peter Haresnape and Cynthia Wallace joined CM staffer Aaron Epp for an online event earlier this month.*

**narrow of what salvation is** and what grace looks like.”—CW

**“I’ve increasingly been convinced that one of the deepest things that we can do is keep coming to the table. . . .** Some of my best moments as a pastor are when I can invite people to the Lord’s table and proclaim in wine and bread that God has done for us what we can’t do for ourselves.”—RD

**“The thing that most brings people to awe is moral beauty—**when people see other people doing good for each other. There’s a beautiful way in which I feel like our churches have the opportunity to be these creative hubs of moral beauty.”—CW

**“We need to tell the truth more.** I think that we need to be people who tell the truth, and that means telling the truth about how imperfect we are as people. . . . I wish our churches were hubs for truth-telling together to cultivate that kind of really robust way of being together in the fullness of our humanity, seeking God.”—CW

**“When things are going well for us, and when our bank accounts are full, and when the country we live in is largely aligned with our ethical values and norms, God becomes . . .**

ornamental and then superfluous. I think that’s a very well-travelled road. What to do about it is a different question, a harder one.”—RD

**“What does it look like for us to become disciples** in a way that prepares our hearts for the time when we will meet suffering, and prepares us to walk with others through suffering? And not just be cocooned in every comfort and distraction we can find? . . . There’s so much more pain in the world than we want to acknowledge and, when we tell the truth of that, I think we face our need for God and for each other.”—CW

**“There’s a great pull quote from one of the letters to Peter . . . [that] talks about always being ready to give a reason for the hope that you have, and I think that’s been very important for me in my life. I’ve made some commitments to a particular faith community and particular faith tradition, and I think you don’t have to go to the [street] corner and get out your bullhorn and yell at passers by about [Christianity], but you’ve got to be willing to talk about—to be truthful and honest about—your own life, and where you have experienced God.”—PH**

**“A wise person once told me they want on their epitaph, ‘Lived openly before God and others,’ and I think that you could do worse for a way of living in the world than to be open with each other, to not sanitize it, to not try and dress it up in kind of religious jargon. But to say, ‘Hey, we’re in this together. We believe God is real, and God is calling us, and God meets us in our pain. Let’s do this together.’”—RD** ☞

*Watch a recording of the discussion at [vimeo.com/canadianmennonite](https://vimeo.com/canadianmennonite).*





# Transitions abound at MC Saskatchewan's annual delegate sessions

Story and Photo by Emily Summach  
Saskatchewan Correspondent  
SASKATOON

**D**avid Boshart, president of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., encouraged Mennonite Church Saskatchewan participants at this year's annual delegate sessions (ADS) to hold on to a hopeful perspective, even as the challenges of church life after the pandemic grew.

"This all begins with Christians who see the world in a different way," he said. "If we are Christians, we see the world differently. We see the world from a watchpost called hope. This is the story that we have been sent to tell, that the impossible has been made possible. We learn to know our contexts. We see the world with a newspaper in one hand and the Bible in another, not confused about which story is more true."

The March 11 sessions attracted more than a hundred people, including 67 delegates, to the in-person and online event, whose theme was "Rooted in good soil: Resourcing the rural church."

One of the more notable challenges facing MC Saskatchewan this year was leadership transitions. The regional church has been without a full-time, permanent executive minister for the past year. Both the current moderator, Terry Stephaniuk, and the finance chair, Gordon Peters, completed their terms at the session.

Alex Tiessen, the nominations committee chair, noted the unusually high number of transitions. The nominations committee had found people who were willing to let their names stand for most of the positions, including for the roles of moderator and finance chair, however, a few vacancies still remained at the start of the ADS. People, especially pastors, were

encouraged by Tiessen to consider, "taking your turn, if you haven't already done so."

The financial picture of MC Saskatchewan was largely positive. The unaudited financial report that was presented showed excess revenue of \$45,698. The excess funds will likely be put in reserve for future needs. Much of the savings from the year was due to lower staff costs because of the executive minister vacancy.

A substantial amount of the business session was devoted to reporting and discussing the camp study that was commissioned by the delegates at the 2022 ADS. The full report on MC Saskatche-

governance structures and bottom lines; and camp as a ministry, a place where spiritual formation occurs.

Stephaniuk, the outgoing moderator, explained that the MC Saskatchewan Council was trying to hold those two things in tension, so that both can be balanced respectfully.

Nancy Epp, a delegate from Rosthern Mennonite Church, responded: "Some of us don't consider that as something to hold equally. The spiritual formation piece is the most important."

The Council thanked the delegates for their feedback and questions, and will take them into account as it moves forward.

One of the most significant leadership changes came near the end of the day. Stephaniuk announced that Gary Peters, a long-time pastor in MC Saskatchewan, will take on the role of interim executive minister. He will serve in the role on a half-time basis for the next six to nine months.

Peters described the process of accepting the role as "surprising" and "spirit-led." He said: "I don't know if I have the gifts and abilities, but I know God is with us, God is with me, and together we can do the work

of God. We can be bearers of God's good news. I look forward to getting to know the congregations a little more closely, and the pastors who serve them. I also look forward to connecting with the larger Mennonite church across Canada."

The work of the church appears to be alive and well in Saskatchewan. At the closing of the ADS, when the commissioning of new and returning leaders took place, all the vacancies had been filled. Sharon Schultz will serve as moderator. ☘



*Kirsten Hamm-Epp, regional church minister, and Josh Wallace, church engagement minister, lead morning worship.*

wan's three camps—Camp Elim, Camp Shekinah and Youth Farm Bible Camp—was distributed to the constituency a few days before ADS.

Tim Nickel, the consultant who conducted the study, shared a general overview of the report. A time of discussion was opened up with the understanding that no decisions would be made or motions put forward.

One of the primary sources of discussion was about camps as a business, with

# At your service

*A family story of war, immigration and connection*

By Madalene Arias  
Eastern Canada Correspondent

**For her first contribution as Eastern Canada correspondent, we asked Madalene Arias to share part of the beautiful story that has brought her to this point.**

**L**ike a garden maze with various starting points, the story of how I became connected to the Mennonite community is the sum of several individual stories that all led to the same place. My family's journey to the Mennonites began with a Mennonite woman extending her compassion to us, and this has become a recurring theme.

My mother, Maciel Hernandez, and late father, Luis Arias, left Nicaragua in 1987. They crossed the border illegally at Tijuana, Mexico. My mother would give birth to me and my sister in the couple of years that followed. Though my parents never received a reply to their refugee claim, by 1991 our family had lived in California, Texas, Florida and New York, before crossing the border into Canada. I have no recollection of the U.S., but I am told we never once got on a plane to move. My father loved cars and being on the road. He also didn't mind pushing boundaries.

Once we ended up in Toronto, my mother made it clear to my father that she was done living a nomadic life. She attended night classes and spent her days looking for work, while my father looked after me and my sister. When he wasn't entertaining us with music, picnics or strolls in the park, he worked odd jobs in construction, helped people move and fixed cars.

Finally, my mom found a volunteer opportunity at the St. Clair O'Connor Community (SCOC), a Mennonite initiative. She began volunteering in the tearoom. Many of the elderly residents grew fond of her and she soon obtained a paid role with the housekeeping department.

But in 1993, Canada Border Services Agency issued an order demanding my



**Madalene Arias**

mother's removal from the country. Not knowing what the future would bring for her family, my mother became fearful and would break down and cry at work.

Staff and residents at SCOC became concerned for her. One of them was Nancy Paul, who managed the Ten Thousand Villages shop in the tearoom. Paul introduced my mother to Betty Kennedy Puricelli, a Mennonite pastor. She and her husband, the late Adolfo Puricelli, led New Life Church, a Spanish-speaking congregation where newcomers were invited to explore the Anabaptist faith. The Puricellis also devoted themselves to advocating for immigrants and refugees, and helping them settle.

Though my sister and I were not aware of the pending deportation, on the day of my mother's scheduled removal from the country, my sister and I were told we could skip school and go to work with our mother. We ended up at Border Services in Niagara Falls with Betty Puricelli, a dozen

staff and two dozen seniors from SCOC. They had a message they wanted to deliver face-to-face.

When we arrived, my mother and Puricelli entered the Border Services office. The seniors sat outside on chairs borrowed from neighbouring businesses as they waited.

When the official in charge of my mother's case stepped out and approached the crowd of seniors, an English gentleman in his 90s by the name of Victor Payne stood up and spoke words engraved in my mother's heart.

"What do you think you are doing? You want to send her away?"

According to my mother, the official stayed quiet and would not look up. Several other seniors were now standing as Payne continued: "She is like my mother, my sister, my daughter, my granddaughter. Who is going to take care of us if you send her away? What are you going to do about it?"

The official returned to his office. He permitted my mother to return home until they reached a decision. A week later, the residents of SCOC received a letter from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. The letter informed them that because of their plea, my mother and her family would be granted permanent resident status on humanitarian and compassionate grounds.

The seniors at SCOC felt like the victors and dubbed themselves "The Grey Power."

After a few more years of working with senior residents at SCOC, my mother received an offer to bring her family to live in one of the townhomes of SCOC, which includes intergenerational housing. My sister and I were 7 and 8 when we learned we would each get to have our own



bedrooms. Up until then, our family had lived in various half-finished basements throughout Scarborough. Mice and centipedes don't scare me. I'd long wondered what it would be like to live in the upstairs part of a house where sunlight poured through the windows.

Late one night in March 1997, my mother opened the door to townhouse P12. Weary from weeks of anticipation and packing, we found ourselves enveloped in a stillness that smelled of freshly painted walls and new carpet. We knelt with our hands together and thanked God.

Living at SCOC entrenched our family's connection to the Mennonite community. By that time we were attending New Life Church regularly. That year, the congregation was welcomed to worship in the upper floor of the Toronto United Mennonite Church (TUMC) building on Queen Street East.

Although I wasn't a fan of church as a kid, I was never without the possibility of forming connections. Shannon Neufeldt, who currently works with Kairos, served as youth leader at TUMC during my adolescent years. She made consistent efforts to include kids from New Life Church in activities with youth from her congregation.

In 2003, I joined hundreds of young Mennonites from across Canada on a trip to Zimbabwe for the World Mennonite Conference assembly. I remember a gentleman named Andy Brubacher who made sure we always had plenty of food while on the road.

That year, I also joined several youth from TUMC to march alongside thousands in protest of the American invasion of Iraq. My father also joined, along with some members of New Life Church.

My church attendance became less consistent later in my teenage years, but I always crossed paths with Mennonites.

My father shapes a great part of who I am. At age 16 he joined the Sandinista resistance against the ruling dictatorship. He fought until they overthrew President Somoza in 1979.

When I was a child he'd explained to me that the American government funded the dictatorship that ruled Nicaragua for



MAP BY SAM KAL / MODIFIED BY BETTY AVERY

more than four decades. The CIA trained the Nicaraguan guards who torment their own people.

I could not have been more than 10 years old when I first asked about his involvement in "the war." I asked whether they had won. I asked who the good guys were.

"No, we didn't win," I recall him saying to me in Spanish. He told me that when the "good guys" took power, they became just like the bad guys.

Conflict in Nicaragua carried on through the 1980s in the Contra wars. Looking back now, I believe the aftermath of this revolution left my father profoundly heartbroken and in search of some way to make sense of things.

I'd like to think that in the final two decades of his 54 years, connecting with a community of Christians who challenge the military budgets of wealthy nations, made him feel like he'd always had brothers and sisters out in the world.

We lost my father to cancer on April 13,

2014. In the middle of the night, former TUMC pastor Marilyn Zehr arrived to be with us in the room where my father drew his last breath.

My desire to work as a journalist is born out of the lived experiences of my parents. Through my father I learned that players in a comfortable part of the world—like the CIA—could tug strings and spill the blood of generations in another. My mother's journey has shown me that bearing witness to the hardships of another can empower someone to take a stand and effect change.

Now, here I am at the service of all those with a story to share no matter who they are.

I am so grateful for the genuine welcome I have received from the people at *Canadian Mennonite* and for the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to this publication. ☸

Madalene Arias can be reached at [ec@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:ec@canadianmennonite.org).





# COVID accelerated global church growth

*International Witness director visits global partners*

By Emily Summach  
Saskatchewan Correspondent

**H**ow big is your church? This is the question that Jeanette Hanson, director of International Witness for Mennonite Church Canada, posed at a recent regional church gathering in Saskatchewan. If the past few months of Hanson's life are any indication, the Mennonite church is expansive and full of life. She spent the time visiting Mennonite churches and global partners.

have felt so urgent to go. I've visited Thailand, Colombia, Laos, Vietnam and the Philippines. The rate of development of the church in those countries has been tremendous."

While Mennonite churches in North America have lamented the decline of church attendance and participation after the pandemic, the reverse is true for many of the regions that Hanson visited.

Thailand. Some of the churches are very small, with 10 or so people, she said, but their focus is on being embedded within the communities and training leaders to start their own house churches.

Each of the countries she visited had their own stories of growth and joy in their faith communities. "Everything is happening at light speed," she said. Eighty-five percent of Anabaptists now reside



PHOTO BY JEANETTE HANSON

*This congregation of the Bru tribe in southern Laos (specific region withheld for security reasons) celebrates the completion of a new worship space. Lao Mennonite Fellowship Canada provided funds for the building.*

"This year has really been a catch-up year, in terms of relationships," she said. "I started in this role with International Witness in the summer of 2019. I was just getting my feet wet, and then COVID hit. I had visited one or two partners in the fall of 2019, and then nothing until 2022. If it hadn't been for that timing, it wouldn't

In Thailand, she said there was a "really big paradigm shift towards small house churches. A lot happened during COVID, where a lot of people moved back to their hometowns from the cities, and these small-group house churches started."

There are now more than a hundred Mennonite/Anabaptist house churches in

in countries other than North America and Europe.

With story after inspiring story being told by Anabaptist siblings in the Southern Hemisphere, it would be easy to tell their story as a success and the North American story as failing. Yet, for Hanson, the experiences of the church in Canada and

the church in Asia are not two opposing narratives, one of decline and the other of growth. Rather, it is a story about old roots and new leaves.

“We [in the North American church] need to lean into this ‘reframing,’ and the question of ‘Who’s your church now?’ Rather than saying, ‘There are only 12 kids in Sunday school,’ we can say, ‘I have 12 kids in Sunday school!’ ‘Who’s your church now?’ Some of the Chinese pastors said to me, ‘We need each other right now. You have roots and we have leaves. They feed each other. We need each other.’”

Hanson reminisced about a leadership-training conference that was held in Vietnam in February. Kevin Barkowsky, of Mennonite Church B.C., led a session on church unity. He asked leaders to consider the question, “How long are your arms?” He said, “We can stop talking about where we stand, but, instead, ask, ‘How long are your arms?’” From wherever you stand,

how far can you reach to grasp the hands of siblings in faith who stand elsewhere. Hanson believes this message resonates for the church in North America.

It is within that spirit of unity in Christ that Hanson sees the promise of a rich and symbiotic relationship within the International Witness program. Church leaders in Asia see the North American church as having deep roots in theology and education. There is a desire to learn from such a fully developed peace theology and historical roots.

“We [in North America] might say, ‘Well, that’s just Christendom,’ but there is a cry to be connected to something that is deeper than the last 20 years,” she said.

The International Witness program is making efforts to fulfil those longings through in-person courses taught by faculty from Mennonite seminaries, such as Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont.

In return, the global faith family can help North Americans reimagine church life in this post-Christendom age. Hanson stressed that in Asia there is no preconceived notion of what a church “should” look like. She visited churches in homes, farms, shoe stores and even a bamboo chopstick factory.

“How do we learn to be a church in the minority? We do have a choice to make,” she said. “Are we chaplains/hospice care for our churches? Are we going to be missionary churches in our community? . . . Because the Christian church in most Asian countries is such a minority, becoming a Christian is a big decision. That is then your identity. They don’t talk about going to church, they talk about ‘being’ the church, or how that they ‘are the church.’” ❧

## Vietnam church strong, dynamic

*Mennonite congregations flourish in modernized country*

By Amy Rinner Waddell

B.C. Correspondent  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

**W**ith 100,000 members, the Mennonite church in Vietnam is going strong, reports Nhien Pham. The retired pastor, who came to Canada from Vietnam in 1976, returned to his home country for a month with a group from Mennonite Church Canada earlier this year. Pham is president of the North American Evangelical Vietnamese Fellowship and advisor for Evangelical Church Vietnam. Previously he served as pastor of Vietnamese Mennonite Church in Vancouver.

Joining Pham were Garry Janzen and Kevin Barkowsky, both of Mennonite Church B.C., and Jeanette Hanson of Mennonite Church Canada. The group went on a learning tour and attended the Evangelical Mennonite Vietnamese Conference, where they met various leaders of Vietnam’s Mennonite congregations.

Pham (NP) recently talked about his trip and the state of the church in Vietnam with *Canadian Mennonite’s* B.C. correspondent, Amy Rinner Waddell (ARW).

**ARW:** *What changes have you seen over the years in Vietnam?*

**NP:** The country has been developed a lot; it’s like Europe, clean and modern. They have high-rise condos, shopping malls with stores like Starbucks. You would think you’re in Vancouver. People wear clothes that look a lot nicer than before, the streets are cleaner than before. The country is really developed and the condition of the people has really improved; people seemed to enjoy life there.

**ARW:** *What is the history of the church in Vietnam?*

**NP:** The church closed at the end of the war in 1975. It was closed for over 20 years. In 1997, another Vietnamese pastor and I went to see if we could help restore the church. We started a Mennonite church in Saigon (renamed Ho Chi Minh City in 1975)—not that we resurrected it, we started a new church. Until 2002, there were 100 Mennonite churches with 10,000 believers. In 2002, we encouraged them to form a conference of Mennonite churches together with Eastern Mennonite Missions (in the United States). When we were persecuted, the church became stronger.

**ARW:** *How does the church operate in Vietnam?*

**NP:** The government tries to control every organization. There are churches officially recognized by the authorities and they





PHOTO COURTESY OF KEVIN BARKOWSKY

*Garry Janzen (left), Yha Robin, Nhien Pham, Hung Doan Dinh and Kosor Tuih in Qui Nhon, Vietnam, on Feb. 14.*

only do whatever the government allows or supports. Some churches or leaders are very submissive to the authorities; other groups not officially recognized can still operate. If you don't criticize the authorities, they will not arrest you. In general, the church has freedom to do ministry. They can meet together, celebrate ordinations and that sort of thing.

In churches in certain areas, Christianity is very much opposed. If you compare it to China, Vietnam is a lot better. Recently, there was a crusade in Ho Chi Minh City, where Franklin Graham spoke, a two-day event.

**ARW:** *Tell me more about the March 4-5 crusade by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.*

**NP:** It was really amazing; 20,000 people came! It was organized by a coalition of local churches. The government supported

it and sent police to protect it. Vietnam tries to be a nation of freedom of religion.

People in the local area came by car, motorcycle, bus and organized a number of people to come to Ho Chi Minh City. People after the altar call invited Christ into their lives.

In the program, there were worship songs led by Vietnamese singers and bands, and there were songs led by a worship team. [Christian gospel singer] Michael Smith was there, and I was amazed that young people sang along with him in English.

**ARW:** *How many churches were you able to visit, and what were the services like?*

**NP:** We visited six churches in a three-day trip. In one church that we attended they sang traditional hymns with some praise choruses and 300 people all sat on the floor. The way they sing songs is

really dynamic. After Kevin [Barkowsky] preached, I translated, and one of our team members asked people to respond. They called for repentance and a right heart, healing of body and emotional healing. When the people pray, they stand up or kneel down.

**ARW:** *What is your hope for the church in Vietnam?*

**NP:** I would like to see the church more self-sufficient. They don't have funds to operate because they don't have a way to raise money in Vietnam. We are encouraging a culture of tithe to support the church and the local conference. We are praying for the churches. Most churches are in rural areas where people don't make a lot of money. We pray that we can plan so that they have financial resources. ☸



# Continuing a good work at the Christian Benefit Thrift Shop

By Maria H. Klassen  
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*  
ST. CATHARINES, ONT.

**T**he Great Winter Warm-up is not a new concept, having begun in January 2020, when individuals, churches and community groups took up the challenge given by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) to knit comforters to be sent overseas.

And the invitation came again this February. Could 45,000 comforters be made to send to global neighbours who are in crisis situations?

The Christian Benefit Thrift Shop in St. Catharines took up the challenge. A quilt frame was set up in the shop for a few days. Experienced quilters, volunteers from the shop as well as customers, lent a hand to tie the blankets.

For those new to the concept, experienced quilters were on hand to

demonstrate and give lessons. Emmy Krause has volunteered in the store for 45 years, during which time she has stitched many quilts and tied many knots.

Vanessa Perkins is a more recent volunteer at the shop. She came to the store to do some shopping several years ago. On one of those visits she saw the sign that volunteers were needed. And so she signed up.

“I believe in the purpose of the store,” she says. “It fills a great need in the community, for those shopping, for those donating and for those working there.”

After two days, 10 comforters were knotted, to be taken to the MCC Material Resources Centre in New Hamburg, Ont., where they will be loaded up with many other comforters and shipped overseas. ☼



MCC PHOTO BY KEN OGASAWARA

*Vanessa Perkins and Emmy Krause work on a comforter at the Christian Benefit Thrift Shop during the Great Winter Warm-Up.*



TEXT AND PHOTO BY  
DIANE WILDE

*Harmony Hearts women at United Mennonite Church in Black Creek, B.C. held their first Great Winter Warm-up on Feb. 25, with about 30 people—including Mabel Petrie, Melody Lang and Deana Longland, pictured—in attendance, despite the snowy weather conditions. Upon arrival there were 29 blankets on display illustrating the various stages of blanket making. The following weekend, 39 blankets were sent to Mennonite Central Committee B.C.*

# From Aleppo

*Looking for hope in the destruction*

By Meghan Mast  
Mennonite Central Committee

**“T**here would always be hope somewhere, but now everything is destroyed. There are still areas that were not affected directly, not destroyed, but the people there are destroyed from inside.”

These are the words of Petra Antoun, a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) staffer in Syria, reporting from Aleppo, Syria on Feb. 24. She is working with MCC church and civil-society partner organizations that are looking for ways to bring hope and practical help to people who are reeling from the aftermath of the earthquakes in Syria and Türkiye.

Syria was already weakened by almost 12 years of armed conflict that preceded the Feb. 6 and 20 earthquakes. The fighting, which began on March 15, 2011, damaged many buildings, making them vulnerable

to shocks from the earthquakes. Many families have also been displaced by conflict and are living in unfinished and unsafe buildings that are at higher risk of collapse.

Antoun (PA), who also felt the earthquake in her home city of Tartous, spoke with Meghan Mast (MM), a multimedia storyteller with MCC Canada, about the situation and MCC’s response on “Relief, development and podcast,” an MCC podcast. In this article, their words have been condensed for length and readability.

**MM: Can you describe how things are looking in Aleppo right now?**

**PA:** I was walking the past two days, just looking above, checking if something would fall. Most of the buildings are either destroyed by war and then the earthquake,

or they are about to fall. People are scared of going back to their house to do their normal tasks. Kids are afraid. They have this trauma, the screams of their mothers, or whatever they have experienced. And people are not speaking about the trauma that they have been through.

**MM: It sounds like some of the need that you’re seeing is psychological. What are some of the other needs that you’re seeing right now?**

**PA:** Before the earthquake, it was difficult for people to get their basic needs [met]. And now, after what’s happened, many lost their jobs. They need food. This is the basic, basic need nowadays. They need a place to stay because now they are at the main centres that we have: the schools, the mosques, the churches, halls and some other centres that they use for community.

So, there are many needs that we can help with. But this needs a lot of thinking, wisely and in coordination with other communities, other organizations on the ground, so no duplication will happen. We need to think: What are the needs not only for now, but also for the couple of weeks to come, for the couple of months to come?

**MM: Are MCC and our partners responding already? Or is this sort of a collecting information stage?**

**PA:** I think it’s both now. We are thinking about doing things to intervene now.

All the partners are asking for support in rent. And, by the way, they don’t have hot water to take a shower in these centres, so they were putting cold water on the kids to shower them.

In Aleppo, it’s very cold. It’s the coldest city in Syria. I know you cannot compare it to Canada, sure. But for Syria, it’s too cold. We don’t have fuel, any kind of heaters. We don’t have electricity most of the time. It’s a huge, huge matter here.



MCC PHOTO BY PETRA ANTOUN

*The youth of the Aleppo are growing up in the shadow of destruction, armed conflict and economic insecurity.*





PHOTO COURTESY OF HOPE CENTER

*A pedestrian walks beside collapsed buildings in Aleppo, Syria.*

**MM:** *What are some of the stories you have heard that have stuck with you?*

**PA:** One of the partners was telling us that he was a bit sad because there were families who, even during the 12 years of war, never reached out to the church to give them any food basket or any help. But now, with the earthquake, they are reaching [out]. They lost their income, their shop was destroyed, or even if it's not destroyed, nobody is going to buy anything. I mean, you can find people buying food, but not shopping to buy a jacket or shoes. So those people who have these clothes shops, how will they live if nobody is buying from them?

Many people left Aleppo. There was a small car having more than nine people sleeping inside it. Kids are afraid to go back to the house or, even if they go back to the house, they are afraid to stay in their rooms. The older they get, the more traumatized they are.

**MM:** *Syria had been facing hardship before the earthquakes through many years of war. Can you talk about the compounded challenges that Syria's facing?*

**PA:** Yeah, with the sanctions issue. Sanctions [put in place by many countries in 2011] were very hard on the Syrian people. They were putting sanctions on the government but, to be honest, they were on the people. Because of that, we don't have fuel to generate electricity, to have some heat during winter, or to have bread, basic items or formula for babies.

Things are too expensive with the high exchange rate. A normal family will not be able to afford to get their basic needs because of the high costs, which is caused by the exchange rate, which is caused by the sanctions. So, everything is related.

**MM:** *What would you say to MCC supporters who are expressing care and concern about people affected by the*

*earthquake?*

**PA:** I would say thank you first. Really, thank you. You are trying to help the vulnerable people who were hit by both war and the earthquakes. I would say keep praying for the people. It's a huge thing to give money, because this is totally needed. For sure. But also keeping people in your thoughts, in your prayers, is a very important thing.

**MM:** *Was there anything else that you wanted to add?*

**PA:** I like taking pictures of hope. In Aleppo, I was just searching for any kind of hope, any way to take a picture that would look like this is a good thing to mention. But now, everything is destroyed. There are still areas that were not affected directly, not destroyed, but the people there are destroyed from inside. ☹️

To support MCC's response in Syria, visit [mcccanada.ca](http://mcccanada.ca).





# MC Manitoba re-imagines church together at annual gathering

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe  
Manitoba Correspondent  
WINNIPEG

The buzz of conversation and singing was a welcome sound as people filled Douglas Mennonite Church in Winnipeg for Mennonite Church Manitoba's first in-person gathering in three years.

This year's event hosted more than 150 people, including 111 delegates, on March 3 and 4. The theme was "Re-imagining church together."

"It's a focus befitting the current state of the world," said Michael Pahl, MC Manitoba's executive minister. "We're in a time of upheaval and uncertainty."

In conversations with church folks throughout the year, he said he heard repeatedly: "Our church has changed, our church is changing, and we're not sure what this all means."

As 2023 also marks 25 years since the creation of MC Manitoba's vision, mission and values statement, congregations and the regional church are, or should be, asking, "Who are we as a church? What is God calling us to be and to do now, in this time and place?" according to Pahl.

The regional church expanded by two congregations, as delegates voted to accept Aberdeen Evangelical Mennonite Church into full membership and Saint Julian's Table into affiliate membership. Both decisions were preceded by a sea of hands vying to second the motions of acceptance, and were followed by energetic applause. These congregations are the first additions to the regional church in many years.

Aberdeen is a small congregation in Winnipeg's North End, which formed in 1957 and has been part of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference ever since. But the conference does not ordain women for ministry, and Aberdeen has had several female pastors.

"Our congregation wanted to be part of a conference that fully blesses and supports the involvement and leadership of



PHOTO BY KAREN SCHELLENBERG

*Sol Janzen (left), Heidi Dirks, Marcus Rempel and Teresa Enns Zehr represented the two congregations joining MC Manitoba at this year's annual gathering: Aberdeen Evangelical Mennonite Church and Saint Julian's Table.*

women, and membership in MC Manitoba fulfils this desire," said Teresa Enns Zehr, Aberdeen's pastor. "As we make this transition, we hold on to our history and the legacy . . . but look forward to the future with anticipation and new energy."

Saint Julian's Table is an ecumenical congregation that meets via video conference and in person at St. James Anglican Church in Beausejour, Man. The small congregation that began in 2016 is part of the Anglican Diocese of Rupert's Land, but has many participants with roots, and wounds, in MC Manitoba. Marcus Rempel, the congregation's pastor, is ordained in the Mennonite church.

"For me personally, there's a sense of homecoming," said Rempel, who left his Mennonite congregation decades ago. "Joining the conference felt like having a marriage outside the family be treated as legitimate. I don't have to choose between one family or another."

Both congregations are excited for the opportunity to join working groups for causes about which they're passionate, but haven't had enough people or resources to run initiatives on their own.

Two congregations also decided to withdraw from MC Manitoba in the last year. River East Mennonite Church in Winnipeg officially ended its membership on July 1, 2022. Carman Mennonite Church has voted to leave the conference, which will take effect on Sept. 1 of this year.

"Their decision to break fellowship with the other congregations that make up MC Manitoba feels like a death in the family," Pahl told *Canadian Mennonite*. "And we know, too, that it's hard for many people in those congregations. We are always very aware of the personal, relational impact of these corporate decisions. We grieve every loss and we mourn with every person impacted by that loss."

These changes were acknowledged

during a time of lament and thanksgiving at the gathering's opening worship service on March 3.

Jubilee Mennonite Church was also on the hearts and minds of many at the meeting, as the Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba simultaneously held its annual assembly on March 4, and voted to revoke Jubilee's membership because of Jubilee's statement of LGBTQ+ inclusion. The Winnipeg congregation had been a member of both MC Manitoba and the MB denomination.

The MC Manitoba meeting included breakout groups on church buildings, camping ministry, finances, conflict in Israel-Palestine and climate action.

With respect to finances, after seeing notable surpluses in 2020 and 2021, 2022 ended with a deficit, largely as a result of shortfalls in camping ministry. But looking ahead to the coming year, camper numbers are already tracking higher, rentals are booked solid and the camp's capital campaign is in the works. The delegates committed afresh to the 2023 budget.

Gathering 2023 marked the end of Gerald Gerbrandt's time as moderator of MC Manitoba, after serving for five years in the position. The new moderator is Cheryl Braun, pastor of Glenlea Mennonite Church. "I am very much looking forward to connecting with, listening to and representing our diverse congregations, as we seek to nurture and grow the ministry of MC Manitoba," she said. ❧

## /// News shorts

### First Anabaptist DMin program starts

The first ever cohort of seven doctor of ministry students began coursework at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in January. Using the question, "What more do I want to know, become or do as an Anabaptist leader?" students create a plan to gain expertise in: Anabaptist leadership, intercultural leadership, teaching leadership, change leadership and resilient leadership.

Due to visa constraints, the program is only available to U.S. students at this time.

### Grebel discontinues Toronto theological centre

Conrad Grebel University College will discontinue its Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre program at the end of the academic year. Limited resources will be focused on in-house programs. Grebel will no longer have staff at the Toronto School of Theology (TST). The Fellows program will end, as will the occasional scholars forums. A formal academic affiliation with TST will continue.

### New endowment to fund archives

The Mennonite Archives of Ontario at Conrad Grebel University College has received funding for new projects through the Robert J Tiessen Archival Community Education Endowment Fund established last month. Anita Tiessen set up the endowment in honour of her late husband and history aficionado, Bob Tiessen. The endowment will contribute more than \$10,000 to the archives annually.

### Grebel and MC Eastern Canada renew partnership

Conrad Grebel University College and Mennonite Church Eastern Canada have signed an agreement detailing their institutional relationship framework as part of Grebel's *Renewing An Inspired Community* strategic plan. Through meetings that began in November 2021, the institutions were able to jointly assert the ways in which their organizations are both distinct and linked, including the college's formation through the vision and work of Mennonite church leaders in the 1960s.

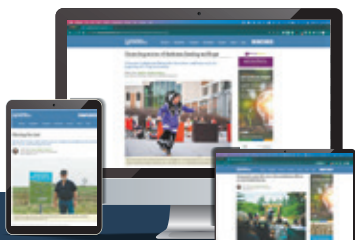


PHOTO BY MARGARET GISSING

*Grebel president Marcus Shantz and Ann L. Shantz, MC Eastern Canada's intentional interim executive team leader are signatories to the renewed partnership.*

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**CANADIAN  
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# Journey from pastor to politician

*Caleb Ratzlaff is a person of interest*

By Maria H. Klassen  
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*  
ST. CATHARINES, ONT.

Caleb Ratzlaff has always had an interest in theology and politics. After spending time in seminary, he ultimately decided to complete a master's degree in political philosophy at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto. Last November, he was elected to the St. Catharines city council, at which time he left his position as pastor of Westview Christian Fellowship.

From early on, Ratzlaff had been interested in the politics of Christ. Although he found it difficult to read Old Testament stories, such as the Tower of Babel, the Israelite exile and King David's leadership, through an evangelical lens, which encourages non-Christians to trust Christ as their Saviour, these stories came to life for him when he allowed himself to apply a political perspective to them.

"I got a better understanding reading scriptures through a critical theory lens, asking the question, 'Who has power, wealth and authority, and who doesn't?'" he says. And that, he says, "is a political question." He feels there is a close connection between religion and how people organize their lives, which he calls politics.

Working as a pastor for the last seven years at Westview, which has birthed the Westview Centre4Women, Ratzlaff sees the neighbourhood as misunderstood and looked down on. The Queenston neighbourhood is often not seen for its strengths of resilience, compassion, and how the members are helping and supporting each other, he says.

"They're doing much of the heavy lifting around opioids, addictions and mental health, that other parts of the city refuse to address," he says.

The neighbourhood association he and Westview are part of, wants to make this

known by elevating the collective voice of those who work, live and play in the area. Ratzlaff wants to be part of this change.

Tension between his Christian beliefs and the work of the council came up at council recently. When council made a motion to support continued federal funding of military aid for Ukraine, he

shape congregants into a just community, a community of Christ followers, a community pursuing justice and peace rather than greed and control? With their feet on the ground, Ratzlaff says, and their hands helping those that need a hand. Christians need to open their eyes and ears to see where they can do justice, to



PHOTO BY JANESSA JESSOME PHOTOGRAPHY

*Caleb Ratzlaff mingles with supporters at his campaign launch.*

shared his grandmother's immigration story of how she came to Canada a century ago, fleeing persecution in present-day Ukraine. His grandmother's pacifism, despite persecution, inspired him to abstain from voting on the motion, he says.

How does the church community

love kindness and walk humbly with God.

And, for Ratzlaff, that is being a city councillor, having run on a platform of dealing with affordable housing and alternative transportation, among other issues. ❧



# On a journey with Jesus

*Post-Christendom in Essex County*

By Barry Bergen

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*  
LEAMINGTON, ONT.

When Colin McCartney of Connect City, a church-planting ministry in Toronto, came to Leamington last month, members of five local congregations in Essex County were taken on a journey from Christendom—where the church used to thrive—to post-Christendom—where it is now struggling.

More importantly, he led the group in thinking about how the church might move to a place in the future where it is thriving again.

When looking at where the church is now, McCartney shared a number of statistics that painted a rather bleak picture featuring dwindling attendance and church closures.

For those in church circles, this reality is nothing new. How the broader church has responded to this reality was shown to take four forms:



Colin McCartney

- **Ignore the reality** and continue to “do church” in the same old way;
- **Become too much** like the culture around it and miss its unique calling to point to the kingdom of God;
- **Become separate** from the world to the extent that it has no meaningful impact on it; and
- **Deal with the issue** by adopting an “us vs. them” approach, which serves to

set non-Christians farther away from the church.

McCartney, who co-founded Connect City, which has planted four churches in the Toronto area, also offered hope for how churches in this time can impact their society today.

Since people are no longer coming to church, “We need to stop thinking, ‘Let’s invite them in.’ They’re not coming. We

need to go to them,” he said. “The church is no longer the respected, influential institution it once was. It needs to become a movement, in much the same way as the early church was.”

He pointed to the first-century church, which had no buildings and dwelt on the fringes of society. The fringes are where the church very often finds itself today. McCartney displayed the traits of churches on the fringes that are successful now:

- **In these churches**, prayer undergirds everything, he said, noting that there are so many examples of Jesus praying in the Bible.
- **These churches** often have no building. If they do have a building it is used as a hub to send members out to where people in need are. The focus of the church is far from the building. The building is not the church.
- **Successful churches** in a post-Christendom age are also not reliant on professional clergy. They see themselves more as a priesthood of all believers.
- **They are** centred on Jesus, as opposed to being centred on a membership list. Churches that are thriving in post-Christendom have dropped the in/out way of thinking about church, which being a member suggests and supports. In the post-Christendom church that McCartney envisions, everyone is on a journey with Jesus. ☿

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**MEDA**

# CMU student finds her place as composer

By Emma Siemens  
CM Intern

With choral singing back in full swing, its community-building capacity is even more obvious to composer and Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) student Anna Schwartz. After writing the song “Answers” at the height of the pandemic, she is set to direct the CMU Chamber Choir’s spring performance of the song on April 28.

The piece is an upper choral voices number, one of numerous compositions by the fifth-year student.

“One of the things I’ve learned a lot about in my composition lessons [at CMU] is writing in a way where it feels like everyone is singing together, even when they’re not,” Schwartz says. “That in itself is a way composers can contribute

to fostering community within the groups that they write for.”

Schwartz wrote the lyrics and music to “Answers” to do just that. The lyrics, which use nature as an analogy for human comfort, are sung in unison and harmony, alternately, throughout the piece, with different voice parts getting a chance to sing the melody. Initially, the piece expressed the necessity of love in a time of social scarcity. As we return to social abundance and encounter love more normally and easily, Schwartz explains, this piece reminds us to treasure this love that much more.

“That is a very different feeling for me than what the feeling was when I originally wrote it, and a really positive feeling,” says Schwartz. The transformation of



PHOTO COURTESY OF CMU

**Composer and CMU student Anna Schwartz.**

this meaning is embodied in the CMU Chamber Choir’s ability to rehearse and perform it together this spring.

“I’m glad we can sing together again,” Schwartz says. “It’s so important for community engagement, for people feeling like they have a place to belong.”

Schwartz herself has certainly found a place to belong in various musical groups. In addition to participating in four musical groups at CMU, 10 of her arrangements and compositions have been performed by CMU groups and others.

“It’s really rewarding and life-giving for me as a young composer to hear choirs not only singing my work, but enjoying my work,” says Schwartz. “I love that CMU is giving us opportunities for that.”

Although Schwartz has conducted most of the performances of her pieces up until now, she plans on getting “Answers” published for other choir directors to conduct themselves as soon as possible. Given her emotional connection to the piece, Schwartz admits this is “scary.”

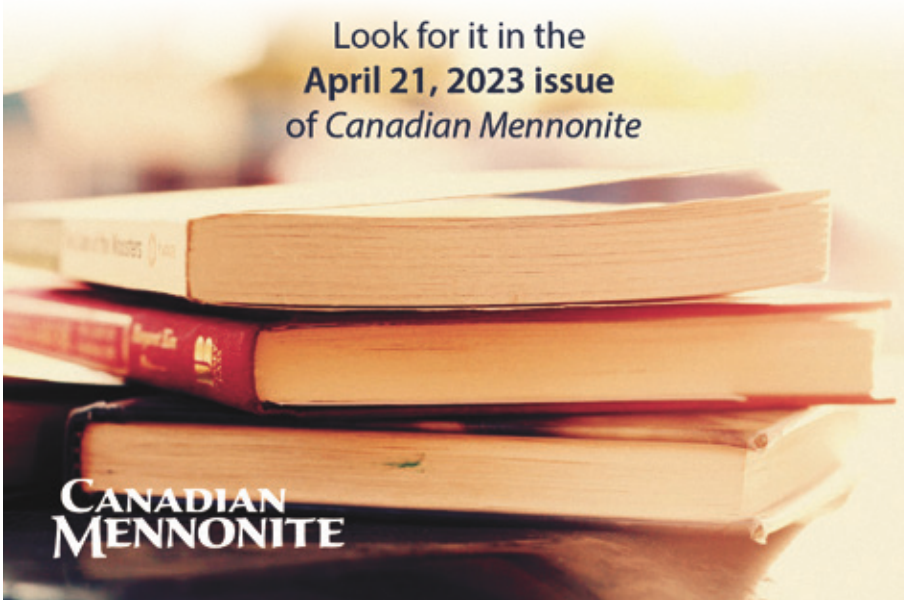
“You don’t know what it’s going to look like, or how it’s going to come across,” says Schwartz. “It’s sort of like sending your baby off into the world.”

Still, says Schwartz, “it’s a really important step.” Hoping to study composition and conducting at grad school once she graduates from CMU this spring, she knows this won’t be the last time she leaves her music to be conducted by another’s hands. Ultimately, she’s happy about this.

“There’s something so gratifying about knowing [my music] is out there doing good for other people,” says Schwartz. And the CMU music community will be the first to attest to that. ❧

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PHOTO COURTESY OF THE FRIARS' BRIAR

*Jack Dyck, retired pastor of Springfield Heights Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, throws the first rock of the 45th annual Friars' Briar in London, Ont. earlier this month. Dyck, along with a pick-up team of Harold Arnett, Tom Dillon and Jim Pankratz, won their first seven games, only to be defeated by the B.C./Wisconsin team in the final game. Twelve teams of clergy and lay people from B.C. to Ontario participated in this year's event. To join in the fun in Regina next March, check out [friarsbriar.ca](http://friarsbriar.ca) or email [friarsbriar@gmail.com](mailto:friarsbriar@gmail.com).*

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## Calendar

### British Columbia

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

**May 6:** MC B.C. women's day, at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford. Theme: "Triumph over trials."

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

### Alberta

**April 22:** "A taste of MCA," at Bergthal Mennonite Church, Didsbury, from 4 to 8 p.m. Hear stories and sample food from the wide variety of cultures that make up MC Alberta..

**June 10-11:** Camp Valaqua hike-a-thon.

### Manitoba

**April 26:** CMU virtual open house, online at 6:00 p.m. Register at [cmu.ca/future/experience](http://cmu.ca/future/experience).

**June 2-4:** 21st annual Manitoba birding retreat, at Camp

Arnes. For more information, [visitcampswithmeaning.org/birding-retreat](http://visitcampswithmeaning.org/birding-retreat).

**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](http://mhsc.ca/soj).

### Ontario

**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 [mcecc.ca/events](http://mcecc.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/](http://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](http://www.mennosingers.com).

**May 5-7:** Theatre of the Beat presents "I Love You and it Hurts," three short plays on elder abuse, healthy masculinity, and intimate-partner violence, at the Kitchener Public Library; (5,6) at 7 p.m., and (6,7) at 2 p.m. For more information about tickets, email [cedric@theatreofthebeat.ca](mailto:cedric@theatreofthebeat.ca).

**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](http://mcec.ca/events).

**June 4-7:** "Tenth International

Conference on Aging and Spirituality," at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo. To learn more, visit [uwaterloo.ca/ageing-spirituality/](http://uwaterloo.ca/ageing-spirituality/).

**July 10:** "The Place of Memory: Reflections on the Russlaender Centenary," at Knox Presbyterian Church, Waterloo; at 7:30 p.m. The program of music, singing, reading and reflection features the premiere of "The Place of Memory" composed by Leonard Enns and performed by the DaCapo Choir. For more information, visit [uwaterloo.ca/grebel/place-of-memory](http://uwaterloo.ca/grebel/place-of-memory).


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

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



## Classifieds

### Employment Opportunities



# CHAPLAIN

Conrad Grebel University College

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Conrad Grebel University College, a residence and teaching community affiliated with the University of Waterloo, seeks a Chaplain for 0.8 FTE (28 hours/week), beginning July 4, 2023. The role involves leading a Student Chapel Committee and planning weekly chapel services, working as part of Grebel's Student Services team to contribute to student recruitment and student life programming and needs, as well as serving as a pastoral counsellor to students, staff, and faculty at the College.

The successful candidate will hold a minimum of a master's degree in divinity or theology, have a clear Anabaptist-Mennonite theological orientation and faith commitment, be a member in good standing of a Mennonite congregation, and have experience in leading worship, preaching, and youth and adult ministry. This role is offered on a continuing employment basis with a starting salary of \$50,990-\$63,738.

Application deadline is Monday, April 10, 2023.  
Read more at [grebel.ca/positions](http://grebel.ca/positions)

## Upcoming Advertising Dates

Issue Date	Ads Due
April 7	March 29
April 21 <i>Focus on Books &amp; Resources</i>	April 12
May 5	April 26
May 19 <i>Focus on Mental Health</i>	May 10
June 2	May 24
June 16	June 7
June 30	June 21
July 14 <i>Digital Issue</i>	July 5
July 28	July 19
Aug. 11 <i>Digital Issue</i>	Aug. 2
Aug. 25	Aug. 16
Sept. 8 <i>Digital Issue</i>	Aug. 30
Sept. 22	Sept. 13
Oct. 6	Sept. 27
Oct. 20 <i>Focus on Education</i>	Oct. 11
Nov. 3	Oct. 25
Nov. 17 <i>Focus on Books &amp; Resources</i>	Nov. 8
Dec. 1	Nov. 22
Dec. 15	Dec. 6
Dec. 29 <i>Digital Issue</i>	Dec. 20



Employment Opportunities  
**Associate Ministers**

**First Mennonite Church of Winnipeg** is an LGBTQ+ affirming congregation with a love for music and a growing sense of our calling in matters of peace and justice.

We are looking to fill two ministerial positions in the following areas of focus:

- Music and Worship
- Christian Formation

Both positions will include or be encouraged to develop broader pastoral ministry. We will be hiring up to a total of 1.5 FTE and will allocate that in conversation with successful candidates.

Full job description and contact information is linked on our homepage.

**[firstmennonitechurch.ca](http://firstmennonitechurch.ca)**

PHOTO BY JOHN SHARP

*Sofia Samatar in Bukhara, Uzbekistan during a 2016 tour.*



*On March 8, TourMagination hosted a conversation between Sofia Samatar and John Sharp. Sharp, a Mennonite historian and biblical scholar, led a 2016 TourMagination trip to Central Asia. Samatar, a New York Times bestselling author, went on that tour and used it as the foundation for her most recent book, *The White Mosque*.*

*The tour explored the story of five wagon trains of Mennonites who left Russia in the 1880s and headed east along the Silk Road. Samatar's acclaimed book weaves that story of Muslim-Mennonite interactions with her own story as the daughter of a Somali-Muslim father and a Swiss-Mennonite mother.*

*You can watch the conversation at [youtube.com/watch?v=zBpypQZQKec](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBpypQZQKec).*