

CANADIAN MENNONITE

June 16, 2023 Volume 27 Number 12

Skies ablaze

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EDITORIAL

The duty of tension

WILL BRAUN

editor@canadianmennonite.org



I did not plan to write about polarization—I've filled my quota on that topic—until

Maxime Bernier held a rally near my home. Bernier leads the People's Party of Canada (PPC) and may be the most prominent populist politician in the country. I couldn't resist the chance to cross the political divide.

I attended the June 10 rally in Winkler, Manitoba, and interviewed Bernier at his hotel two days later.

Bernier is a former Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) cabinet minister who came within a percentage point of becoming the party's leader in 2017. Disillusioned with the CPC, he founded the PPC.

Now Bernier, who does not have a seat in parliament, is running in a federal by-election in the Portage-Lisgar riding where I live. In the 2021 election, the PPC received a higher percentage of the vote here (22 percent) than in any other riding.

The by-election is on June 19, shortly after this issue goes to print. The race is between the Conservatives and the even-more-conservatives.

I love the irony of a big-city franco-phone from Quebec winning the hearts of a surprising number of conservative Mennonites. His appeal is simple: family values. He speaks about a "cult of death," referring to abortion and medical assistance in dying. If elected he would introduce a private member's bill restricting late-term abortion, something he says no one wants to argue against openly.

He notes that while his CPC opponent,

Branden Leslie, is also pro-life, Leslie will not be able to act on that conviction in Ottawa since his party has vowed not to reopen the abortion debate.

Bernier calls the CPC "fake conservatives" who follow polls rather than standing on conviction.

The note he hits most forcefully is his opposition to "toxic trans ideology." He says people should be free to do what they want with their bodies once they turn 18, but before that, medical intervention related to gender transition should not be allowed. He says school teachings on gender identity confuse youth and contribute to mental health crisis.

I sat on the grass in the Winkler park with a neighbour, two long-time friends who attend a Mennonite Church Canada congregation, and my two sons—12 and 16—listening to Bernier.

I kept thinking how horrified some friends and church folk would be to hear Bernier, and how a fair number in our denomination might quietly think: *this guy goes way too far, but he raises worthwhile questions that seldom see daylight in church.*

Some people will say Bernier's language is harmful or dangerous. Indeed, words matter and ideas carry force. Still, we need to weigh the broader danger of seeking to silence and sideline entire groups. That can be counter-productive.

Some people would have felt highly uncomfortable at the rally. Yet the work of crossing divides is important, and discomfort, in appropriate time and measure, is vital spiritually. I went to the rally to experience discomfort, to be

challenged.

It wasn't easy. At many points—including in the hot dog line next to the guy wearing a T-shirt reading, "I'm fully vaccinated with the blood of Jesus"—I had that urge to sneer and dismiss. But to do so would be to dismiss a certain number of my neighbours and friends—people who have helped when trouble hit, coached my kids and occasionally served our family home-grown organic meals in their homes.

The fact that they are decent people does not alter my convictions or dampen my work for causes they might consider wrong. But turning my face toward my neighbour reminds me of the duty of tension.

I can hold to my convictions and even fight against the convictions of others, but I cannot think myself better, or wish others did not exist, or think they do not deserve voice, or excuse myself from the call to love. God made us all and put us here together.

Other business

This issue includes a third installment of our What in the World section. We enjoy putting together these quick and quirky tidbits from beyond Menno-land. We hope you like them too.

Finally, an earlier omission. Excerpts of *Dispatches* by Michael Herr (copyright © 1977 by Michael Herr)—that appeared in Ross W. Muir's May 5 feature, "Dispatches from the front lines"—are used by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, an imprint of the Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. All rights reserved. ❧



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50 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Steinbach liquor vote soundly defeated

Steinbach, Man.—A proposed mixed-drinking by-law was soundly defeated here on Monday, May 14, by a wide margin of almost two to one.

More than 2,500 ballots were cast. This was almost 75 percent of all eligible voters in this town of 6,000.

The record turnout was attributed partly to an intensive campaign by local church leaders through publicity in the local newspaper, mass mailings, and insertions in the church bulletins, stressing the social dangers of liberalized liquor laws.

Mennonite Reporter, June 25, 1973

More military

- 34% of Canadians are “fine” with Canada spending 1.3 percent of GDP on defence, as is currently the case
- 54% want Canada to meet or exceed the NATO goal of 2 percent
- 73% think Canada relies too heavily on the U.S. for security
- 62% want Canada to increase military protection of Arctic territory in response to Russian and Chinese activity

Source: Angus Reid Institute



PHOTO BY U.S. INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND FLICKR

PM at Prayer

“Canadians hold dearly the values of love, of peace, of justice. These values are lived every day by us Christians across the country.”

—Prime Minister Justin Trudeau at the May 30 National Prayer Breakfast



PHOTO BY ALEX GUIBORD, FLICKR

Lego televangelist

Matt Smith built a Lego replica of the Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood set for his toddler and shared it on the Lego Ideas website. Smith attributes the popularity of his design to people’s resonance with Mister Rogers’ “ministry of kindness, gentleness, love and acceptance.”

CNN once called the late Rogers—who was an ordained Presbyterian minister—a “televangelist to toddlers.”



PHOTO BY MATT SMITH, USED WITH PERMISSION OF THE LEGO GROUP

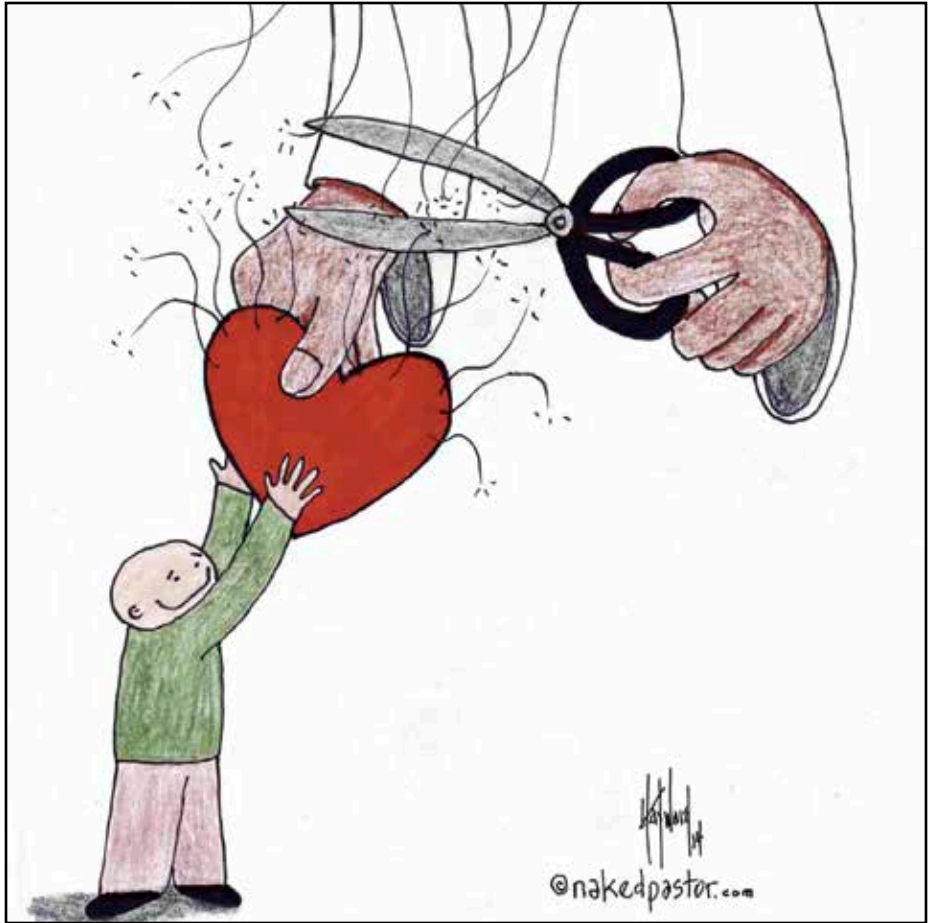
Bible ban

Davis School District in Utah has decided that the Bible contains too much “vulgarity and violence” for elementary and middle school students. Officials took the Bibles off the shelves. It is still permitted in high schools.

Source: BBC



PHOTO BY DANIEL TADEVOSYAN,
SHUTTERSTOCK



A moment from yesterday



Photo: Conference of Mennonites in Canada, Native Ministries

Walnut Receiving Home

In 1976, Jake and Trudy Unrau bought a home at 171 Walnut Street in Winnipeg and opened it up for Indigenous people visiting Winnipeg for medical appointments. In 1977, the Conference of Mennonites in Canada bought the home, and the Walnut Receiving Home became part of its ministry.

From 1979 to 1983 Elijah and Jeannette McKay were the managers. In 1983, Willie and Maria Guenther became house parents (pictured, front row right side, with staff, ca. 1993). The Guenthers befriended visitors by listening, trying to understand their concerns and building trust.

In 1992, the home's two directors and eight staff served 1,190 individuals from 53 communities.

The home closed in 2000 because new government regulations stipulated that homes must be “at least 51 percent Native-owned-and-operated.”

Text: Conrad Stoesz



FEATURE

Broken to serve

A story of anger and hospitality

By Arthur Boers

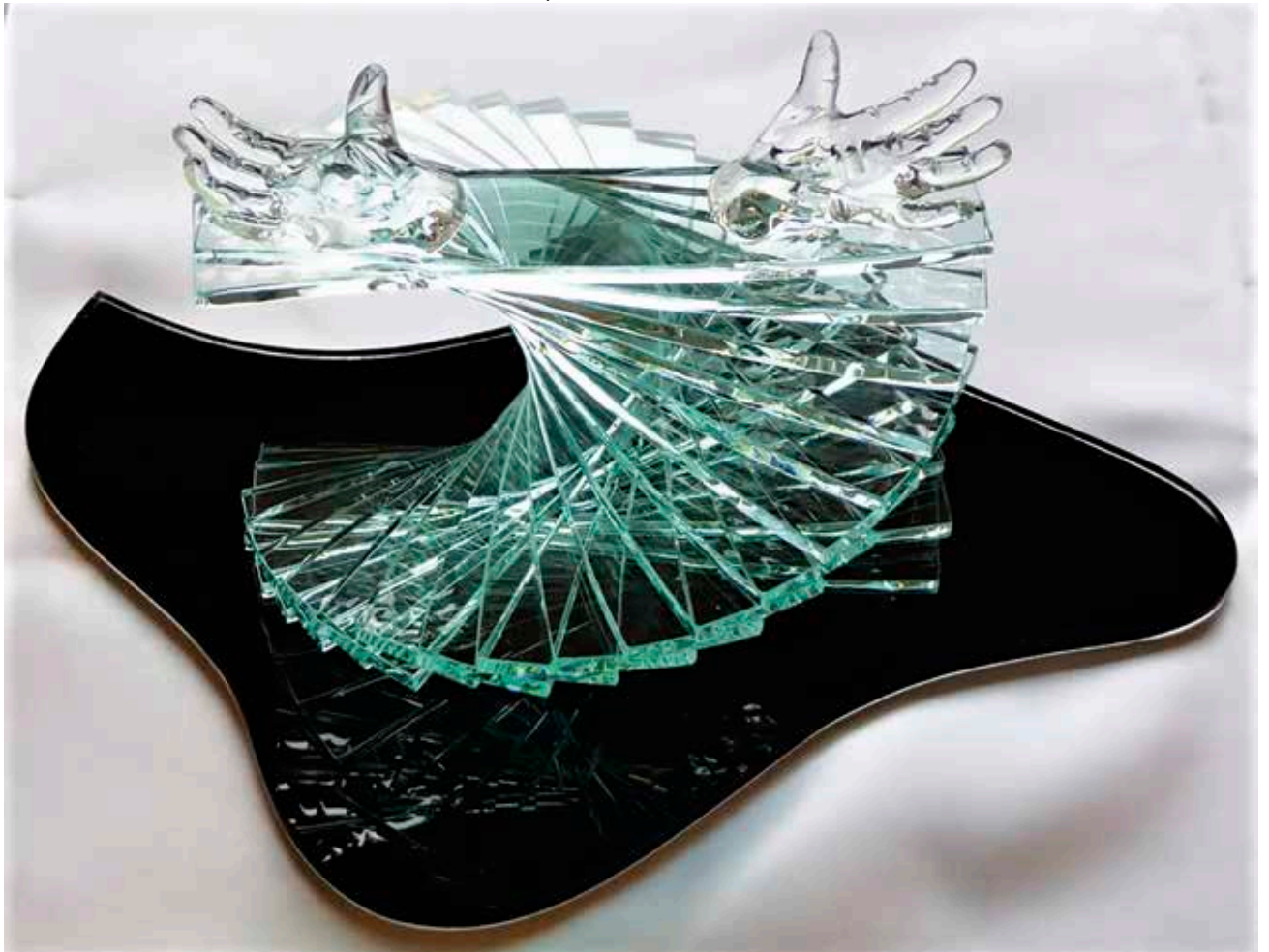


PHOTO BY GEORGE KLASSEN

In my mid-30s, two decades after the last time my father beat me, and two years after he died, I broke glass twice in one week. Once, for the first time in my life, in anger.

On a September Saturday, atop a stepladder, I was scraping the peeling wood around our garage window, preparing it for painting. I thought about long to-do lists at home with our small children and at the rural church I pastored, which was suddenly attracting newcomers who squeezed our small space, not to mention our comfort zone. In a couple of hours I was to head to a Christian education conference where I would give a workshop on

spirituality. Plus, this window needed work. On top of it all, I was to leave for a five-day retreat in 48 hours.

Overwhelmed by an impossibly long list of duties that was complicated by my upcoming trip, a cloud of steamy mist descended into my brain and swirled behind my eyes. I grunted in frustration and plunged my fist against the window, startled by how little resistance the glass offered.

The cascade of jagged accusers clattered to the ground. I felt relief that I had not cut myself, as such an injury would be hard to explain. I fetched a broom and dustpan from the kitchen.

As I stepped back into the garage, my mother pulled up; she had just completed the 90-minute drive for a prearranged weekend visit. She saw the broken window and scattered glass. I averted my face.

“Is het weer zo?” she asked in our native Dutch. “Is it happening again?” She remembered my father.

With nothing to say, I finished cleaning up the debris, then went in, showered, changed into good clothes and put on a tie. I drove to the conference, held in a local high school gym, where Sunday school teachers listened to me claim that prayer can de-stress our lives.

On the way home, I stopped at a hardware store and spent the day’s honorarium on a replacement pane, a can of gray putty, glazing nails and a putty knife. Back home, placing and securing that window, I remembered that my father glazed for years but never repaired his own rage-inflicted destruction.

Retreat

On Monday, I went to stay with Henri Nouwen, a priest whose books had influenced my prayer life and ministry. He resided an hour’s drive away, just north of Toronto at Daybreak, part of L’Arche, a worldwide network of communities where people with developmental and intellectual challenges live with their assistants.

I had interviewed Nouwen for a magazine several years earlier, and then visited a couple times. Now he would guide me on a five-day retreat.

I knew Henri was speaking at a nearby seminary so, as expected, when I arrived at his house, no one was there. I found my room and was welcomed by a warm note and vase of bright sunflowers that testified to his love for Van Gogh. Minutes later he phoned, apologizing for not being there for my arrival. I was glad to hear his familiar Dutch accent, the one that consoles and reassures me. He said he’d given me the “best room.”

That first evening, through my open door, he saw me reading, and said, “You better get a nice lamp. This one is so

awful.” He went down the hall and in minutes showed up with one that he’d retrieved from his room. A while later, he returned, handing me a CD player and discs, Bach’s *Brandenburg Concertos*, Beethoven’s *Moonlight Sonata*, Mozart symphonies, Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons*. “Play these as loud as you like,” he told me. “I won’t mind.”

Every day we met twice for an hour to discuss Scripture passages that he assigned for my meditation, insisting I use his Jerusalem Bible. Pondering those texts, my week’s mantra emerged from Mary’s Magnificat: “The Almighty has done great things for me.”

On my second day, we went to his office, at the front of the Daybreak property. He showed me shelves of his published books. “Just take whatever,” he told me, giving me three copies of the Dutch translation of his Prodigal Son book, *Eindelijk Thuis*, “Finally Home,” the title naming a yearning that he and I both shared,

Another evening, he arrived back at the house around 10 p.m. I was in a chair, illuminated by his lamp, reading with my feet propped on the bed. He sat down on the mattress and gave my legs a friendly pat. We each reviewed our day for the other.

Henri explained that he’d made sure his calendar that week had plenty of space for our conversations. I knew this was no small thing, given his responsibilities and long to-do lists.

Why, I asked, when he had many other commitments? He said, “We’ve built up a relationship and know each other. And you have the stamina to do your thing without being intrusive or demanding.” I thought about that, saying nothing; then he added, “By the way, I don’t want you to pay anything to Daybreak for this stay. You are here as my friend.”

Mystic

All week, I struggled with whether to tell him about that window. It felt ridiculous and humiliating. Every time I came to Daybreak, I seemed to be in crisis. During my first visit, an hour-long interview turned into a daylong

conversation, and Henri addressed my evident stress. Toward the end of our time together, he pulled a chair near and leaned toward me, explaining, “You have a tender heart. This means that God is calling you to a deep spiritual life. Tenderness can destroy you because you can just be pulled apart, burn out, and the whole thing. But you can also be a mystic. That’s what you obviously have to be.”

“What does that mean?” I asked.

“To be a mystic, I don’t mean anything more than that God is the one who loves you deeply. And that’s what you have to trust. And keep trusting, keep trusting, keep trusting.”

On this most recent visit, I evasively summarized my recent days of feeling once again “overloaded” and “stressed.” I couldn’t bear to confess the broken glass, even when he said, “Our time together will be helpful only if you are completely honest.”

Each morning, we prayed with a Carmelite breviary. I kept losing my place in it and Henri helped me find my way. After the formal prayers, we sat for thirty minutes of silence. He concluded our time by kneeling and stretching out his hands and reciting aloud, from memory, Charles de Foucauld’s prayer:

Father,
I abandon myself into your hands;
Do with me what you will.
Whatever you may do, I thank you;
I am ready for all, I accept all.
Let only your will be done in me,
And in all your creatures.
I wish no more than this,
O Lord.
Into your hands I commend my soul;
I offer it to you with all the love
of my heart,
for I love you, Lord,
and so need to give myself,
to surrender myself into your hands,
without reserve
and with boundless confidence.
For you are my Father.

At one breakfast, Henri told me that I needed to make my ministry “more eucharistic,” but I had no idea what he

meant. Our church celebrated the Supper only a few times a year. I didn't ask for clarification though. I felt I should know. Later, that day, he gave me a manuscript of a forthcoming book, *With Burning Hearts: A Meditation on the Eucharistic Life*. From it I learned that in the Eucharist Jesus takes us, blesses us, then breaks us and, finally, gives us into ministry.

Glass

At the end of Thursday's breakfast, Henri stood: "I need to make a quick phone call." He paused, then said, "Oh. Can you clean these for me?" He gestured toward two simple glass candleholders on the counter, streaked by discolored wax that had dripped and accumulated along the sides.

"Sure. *Ik moet iets doen voor de kost.*" ("I have to do something for room and board.") One at a time, I held each holder over the garbage bin. With a butter knife I pried and scraped away large wax chunks. Then I removed the remaining bits with my thumbnail. Finally, I filled the dishpan with warm water and immersed the first, scrubbing and setting it aside on a kitchen towel, before doing the same for the second.

Drying them, I was shocked to see cracks in one. But how? I thought I had handled them carefully, set them down gently. Had the fracture been there before and I overlooked it? Surely I would have noticed? Is this how I repay Henri's hospitality. What would he say? He cherished nice things. Cheryl, a community assistant, wandered through the kitchen.

"Look," I told her. "Somehow this cracked. I don't know whether I did it, but I feel bad. They're pretty simple. They can't be worth much."

"Unfortunately," she said, "they are. A famous glass blower in Vermont custom-made them for Henri."

My stomach tightened over this mishap. I worried about his disapproval or worse. I could hardly sit still as I waited. Minutes later, he burst into the kitchen, hurrying to get to the basement.

"Wait, Henri, I have to show you something."



PHOTO BY KEVIN F. DWYER, USED BY PERMISSION OF THE HENRI J.M. NOUWEN ARCHIVES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE.

Henri Nouwen in 1996.



PHOTO BY GEORGE KLASSEN

This glass fountain, and the piece on page 6, are made from upcycled glass by Steinbach, Manitoba artist George Klassen.

“Okay, but I don’t have much time.”

“I’m not sure what happened.

Whether I did it or not. But one holder is cracked. I’m sorry. I thought I was careful”

He grew very still, no longer in a rush. He looked toward the counter and turned the glass stem in his hands, studying the damage. I waited, fretting. Would he scold and tell me about its value, its specialness, its uniqueness? Would he question whether I was careful enough? Would he raise his voice? Would this ruin—even end—my visit, perhaps all future visits? Would he ask, as my father often did, “What’s wrong with you?”

“Oh, Artur,” he said, for his accent, like my father’s, always mispronounced my name. “It’s Okay. Don’t worry.” Pulling me from my kitchen chair, his long arms swept me into a bear hug, tight against his chest, full body contact. I could count each bony finger pressed into my back. Seconds later he released me and then disappeared, descending noisily to the basement chapel, bouncing down the wooden steps. I hardly knew what had happened.

I went to brush my teeth, hoping to calm myself. Then I too hustled down the stairway planks. I settled into the gentle sway of an IKEA armchair, one where I had meditated on Scripture texts every morning and afternoon that week. Assistants and members arrived, unwrapping blankets, positioning wheelchairs, murmuring encouragements, arranging large pillows for contorted bodies, massaging backs and shoulders.

I knew what to expect: informal eucharistic liturgy and simple songs that involved and included people with severe handicaps, some of them periodically moaning. I would savor Taizé chants and the upcoming homey and holy worship.

I looked at the low-slung altar. Made of highly polished wood and shaped like a boat, an ark, a safe haven in turbulent times. It had been commissioned by Henri for this space.

From behind it, Henri, in white alb and emerald stole, flung his arms right



PHOTO BY HELEN E. GROSE

Arthur Boers

and left, embracing the gathering, and calling, “The Lord be with you.”

My eyes ran to and fro at his ambidextrous invitation and were drawn to the candles. The holders, each bearing one lit taper, stood at attention on opposite ends of the altar. Studying the small sentinels, I could no longer see where that break might be. ❧

Arthur Boers is an Anglican priest, Benedictine oblate, former Mennonite pastor and author. He lives in East York, Ontario. The above is excerpted and adapted from his book, Shattered: A Son Picks Up the Pieces of His Father’s Rage, published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. ©2023. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

For discussion

1. Have you ever broken something in frustration? What were the emotions that clouded your judgment at that moment? How have you tried to repair the damage?
2. Arthur Boers experienced generous hospitality from his friend Henri Nouwen. How does generous hospitality change the dynamics of a relationship?
3. According to Nouwen, what does it mean to be a mystic? How might mysticism keep a tender heart from being destroyed?
4. Do you see value in the kind of retreat that Boers describes?
5. Boers describes the worship time as “homey and holy.” What makes worship homey and holy for you?

—By Barb Draper

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OPINION

/// Readers write

Be in Touch

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

✉ Springfield Heights process flawed

I want to thank *Canadian Mennonite* for the report on Carman Mennonite Church and Springfield Heights Mennonite Church leaving Mennonite Church Manitoba (“Two congregations withdraw from MC Manitoba,” May 5). As a member of Springfield Heights, I would like to point out and add that I was extremely saddened and disappointed regarding the meeting at which the final decision was made and how it unfolded.

The only question at that meeting seemed to be: Why do we need the conference? Only one outside speaker was brought in and he provided insight to the ease of leaving the conference. It is very sad that my congregation has such a narrow view.

How many of our congregants were informed about what it means to be part of MC Manitoba and what they will be missing by leaving? These questions and concerns raise serious doubts as to my continued membership in the congregation.

I feel that more people should actually be aware of what actually went on at our church.

ERIKA MARAND, WINNIPEG

✉ Reconciliation and repair

How do we as Mennonites prepare ourselves for the next step in reconciliation with our Indigenous neighbours: repair?

Buried in the Euro-Mennonite historical narrative is the spectre of violence. Wherever Euro-Mennonites have sought refuge they have built their communities and prosperity on the shattered homes, cultures and lives of Indigenous populations. Russia, Paraguay, the U.S. and Canada are graphic examples of how Mennonites have profited from the spoils of violent settler colonial conquests.

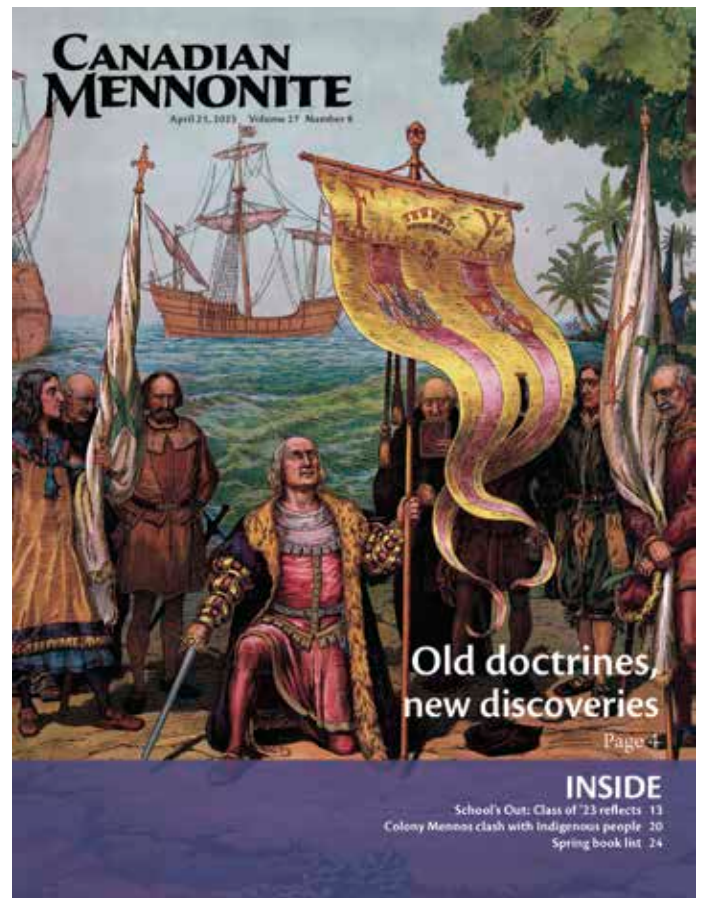
Mennonite identity harbours the oppressive manifestation of this violence enshrined in privileges negotiated with their colonizing hosts.

How can the incongruity between Mennonite Anabaptist beliefs and lived experience be understood and remedied? Mennonite self-definition is defensive of its Anabaptist roots

while at the same time exhibiting signs of amnesia, compromise, willful blindness, racism, duplicity and transparent self-interest. Mennonites have sinned against God and their Indigenous neighbours.

To undo this contradiction requires a retrieval of its Anabaptist character through repentance and “bearing the fruits of repentance.” Seeking forgiveness, making apologies and offering land acknowledgements are symbolic steps leading to the true “fruits of repentance.” Those fruits would include justice through reparations, denouncing Mennonite unearned privilege and committing to solidarity with Indigenous neighbours in their struggle for respect, dignity and self-determination. This includes being generous in making reparations with the direction of Indigenous neighbours. Then we could enter into conciliation with our Indigenous neighbours with clean hands and open hearts.

JOHANN FUNK, SURREY, B.C. (LANGLEY MENNONITE FELLOWSHIP)



✉ Memory lane

I found the article about the Armin String Quartet very interesting (“U2’s Mennonite string section,” May 5). I knew the Armins’ parents, Marta and James Jay. Marta lived in Chortitz, a village south of Winkler, Manitoba, where I

lived too. James was teaching in Chortitz and all the girls had a crush on him.

He gave Marta violin lessons after school. They fell in love and got married in the Chortitz school when Marta was 17. I attended the wedding. However, Marta never learned to play the violin.

ANNE THIESSEN, WINKLER, MANITOBA

/// Online Feedback

✉ Appreciating discomfort

I think the *Canadian Mennonite* is spot on when it makes everyone uncomfortable in some way (“Countering intuition,” June 2) because it is reflecting the diversity that exists in our congregations across the country. Discomfort is part of the process of really listening.

CAROL PENNER, VINELAND, ONTARIO (FIRST MENNONITE CHURCH, VINELAND)

✉ Humble suggestion

I enjoyed your editorial (“Countering intuition,” June 2) but humbly suggest that in the long run you’ll have to leave it to readers to sort out the pros and cons of what you select to print. And by the looks of your letters column, there’s lively engagement in doing just that. Best to you!

DORA DUECK, DELTA, B.C.

/// Milestones

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

Births/Adoptions

Anger—Watson Elliott (b. May 3, 2023) to Tiffany and Adam Anger, Poole Mennonite Church, Poole, Ont.

Balfour—Cohen Wesley (b. Apr. 25, 2023) to Wesley and Jillian Balfour, Poole Mennonite Church, Poole, Ont.

Epp—Simone Abigail Annette (b. May 25, 2023), to Erik and Cara Epp, Rosthern Mennonite Church, Sask.

Gerber/Strathdee—Nora and Rose, twins (b. April 4, 2023), to Josh Gerber and Erin Strathdee, Poole Mennonite Church, Ont.

Rogalsky—Gunnar (b. March 25, 2023) to Matt and Jennifer Rogalsky, Grace Mennonite Church, Steinbach, Man.

Wiebe Driedger—Hattie Lou (b. May 18, 2023), to Alisa Wiebe and Bucky Driedger, Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man.

Baptisms

Jodi Friesen, Timothy Friesen, George Wipf—North Kildonan Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man., May 28, 2023

Mason Penner—Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg, Man., May 28, 2023

Logan Sawatzky—Sargent Ave. Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man., May 28, 2023

Weddings

Janzen/Alexander—Scott Janzen (First Mennonite, Edmonton, Alta.) and Rachel Alexander, April 25, 2023, in Edmonton, Alta.

Deaths

Bergen—Jacob, (Jake), 91 (b. Aug 27, 1931; d. Feb. 26, 2023), Sargent Ave. Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man.

Braun—Linda (nee Hildebrand), 93 (b. June 30, 1929; d. May 27, 2023), Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona, Man.

Burkholder—Myrna, 83 (b. June 23, 1940; d. May 15, 2023), Wideman Mennonite Church, Markham, Ont.

Derksen—Johan Julius (John), 90 (b. Oct. 26, 1932; d. Feb. 23, 2023), Sargent Ave. Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man.

Enns—Henry, 96 (b. July 19, 1926; d. May 20, 2023); First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man.

Enns—Peter, 93 (b. June 1, 1929; d. Mar. 18, 2023), Sargent Ave. Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man.

Epp—Edward, 71 (b. June 18, 1951; d. May 17, 2023), Bethany Mennonite Church, Virgil, Ont.

Gerber—Amos, 90 (b. Sept. 24, 1932; d. May 7, 2023), Avon Church, Stratford, Ont.

Heppner—Irmgard (nee Koehn), 62 (b. Feb. 25, 1961; d. May 31, 2023), Sargent Ave. Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man.

Kopp—Alice (Lepp) (Thomson), 89 (b. Sept. 26, 1933; d. May 31, 2023), Grace Mennonite Church, St. Catharines, Ont.

Overduin—Jan, 79 (b. May 12, 1943; d. May 3, 2023), Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Waterloo, Ont.

Pankratz—Frieda, 91 (b. Jan. 7, 1932; d. May 20, 2023), Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, B.C.

Patkau—Henry, 95 (b. Nov. 5, 1928; d. May 24, 2023), First Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, Sask.

Reimer—Helen (nee Sawatzky), 96 (b. March 7, 1927; d. May 2, 2023); First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man.

Schweitzer—Grace (nee Martin), 83 (b. March 15, 1940; d. April 24, 2023), Erb Street Mennonite Church, Waterloo, Ont.

Shantz—Glen, 92 (b. Jan. 29, 1930; d. Dec. 28, 2022), Erb Street Mennonite Church, Waterloo, Ont.

Wiebe—John, 91 (b. April 28, 1932; d. June 5, 2023), Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg Man.

FROM OUR LEADERS

Are pick-and-shovel prayers still tearing through God's rooftop?

Kevin Barkowsky and Janette Thiessen

In Mark 2:1, Jesus teaches the word to crowds gathered at his home. (Most readers don't realize this was likely Jesus's house). Jesus didn't want the crowds. In the previous verses he healed a leper and told him not to tell anyone. However, the healed leper couldn't keep his mouth shut, which resulted in large crowds forming at Jesus's house.

for destroying his roof? Who do you think did the repair work after? At your congregation, who are the people who maintain the building, and how would they have reacted if this was done in the

“Don't fix the roof until Shel gets here.”

happened at MCBC, Janette, Kevin and Leadership Board's response would be, as it has been for everything for the past four months, “Don't fix the roof until Shel gets here.”

It will take Shel time to meet with each congregation and understand their dynamics as well as get acquainted with the corporate dynamics of the congregations as a whole. Along with a change in employment—moving from a pastoral role in a local congregation to that of leading a denomination—Shel and his wife, Anne, will need to find an MCBC congregation to worship with and possibly relocate to a different community. These are major life changes for Shel and Anne, and our prayer is that we can provide support and space for Shel and his family and not put unreasonable expectations on him to fix all our “broken ministry roofs,” at least not for a few days.

Mark 2:1-12 is not only a true story, it's also a metaphor for prayer. Don't stay on the edge of the crowd. Instead, do the diligent digging through “God's roof” in prayer, and don't stop until you are face to face with Jesus. After spending time with Jesus, you will leave forgiven and on your feet, walking into the world unable to keep silent about the healing power of Christ.

Thank you for keeping MCBC in your pick-and-shovel prayers. ☿

Kevin Barkowsky is the interim executive minister and church engagement minister for MCBC. Janette Thiessen is the office administrator for MCBC.



PHOTO BY SHCHEKOLDIN MIKHAIL, SHUTTERSTOCK

To make matters worse, some men started digging through Jesus's roof, even though there's no scriptural proof they got a building permit or even passed a motion about roof-digging through the disciples' Mennonite Disaster Service Building Task Group.

As the paralytic was let down through the roof, Jesus saw the paralytic and his friends' faith and said, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” Was Jesus forgiving him

name of so-called ministry?

We are happy that Shel Boese is scheduled to begin as executive minister (EM) of Mennonite Church B.C. this August. For the past four months, MCBC has been on a temporary holding pattern regarding vision, because we want to work together to discern a shared vision for the next season of MCBC with our new EM. Therefore, if this roof-digging fiasco

IN THE IMAGE

The gift of urgency

Ed Olfert

An impassioned rant by a grandchild included these words: “Opa, why are you not dead yet?” Why indeed.

The comment regarding my deserved death connects to the story of a recent event in my life.

I had been asked to do some welding on a large metal frame at the local ball diamond. When fully completed, this structure will become a batter’s cage. The frame needed some repair high up, about four metres off the ground. A local contractor offered me the use of his telescopic loader, colloquially known as a “zoom boom,” to lift me to that height.

The day that my portable welder and I scheduled for the job was a Monday. Joe the contractor and his zoom boom were not going to be available on a Monday. Yet, I was ready and eager. “I can do this off my tall step ladder,” I suggested to my wife. “How hard can it be?”

Holly expressed concern that it could be at least a little hard. “Okay, but I’ll come along to steady the ladder,” she said. “It’s very windy out there!” So it was that we found ourselves setting up, windy indeed, on ground where the snow had only recently disappeared, ground that was covered with dry grass.

I was feeling pretty good about my progress, but then Holly shouted up at me that she could no longer support my ladder because she was fighting fire in the grass directly below me with a shovel. I glanced down long enough to be assured that she was doing that efficiently, that great danger to the

village was being mitigated, and went back to work. Suddenly, there was no more step ladder under me, only two metres of air.



PHOTO BY ANNALISA JONES, SHUTTERSTOCK

Jesus teaching from a fishing boat on the edge of the Sea of Galilee.

I went down hard. I was, I thought, uninjured, and within a few minutes was up on the ladder again, finishing the repair.

Three days later, my single functioning eye developed an internal bleed. For close to a week, I was mostly unseeing, driven and led to specialist appointments, lying on my couch, cared for and scolded by most everyone in my life.

I have little doubt that the tumble and the eye issue are related. I have little doubt that if I was in fact more patient, more careful, more cautious, that my eyes and my ears would have had a fair chance of serving me well till the end of

my days. When I deny that, some become short with me.

There’s a story in the Gospel of Luke about Jesus teaching a group of folks on the edge of the Sea of Galilee. The crowd surges, and Jesus is squeezed toward the water. He asks that a fishing boat be brought alongside, and he finishes his preaching from on deck. The episode ends with a great fishing tale as well.

I’ve no doubt that story wouldn’t have played out so well if Jesus had decided to wait for the weekend for Joe to bring the zoom boom. There is a time for urgency.

I have a unique gifting of qualities, as we all do. That quality of urgency, sometimes defined more as impatience, has often been derided as harmful, negative, and inferior to a patient approach. But I challenge that assumption. Every quality that you or I embody, every one, has

both a bright side and a shadow side. Every quality needs to be carefully portioned out in the right moment. Every quality must be continually evaluated: what is the most effective approach, the most useful, the most faithful? Do we create blessings, or do we create harm?

In the end, I’ve got a great story to embellish, and I give thanks that I’m again somewhat sighted. ☸



Ed Olfert lives in Laird, Saskatchewan, and can be reached at p2peho@gmail.com.

MIND AND SOUL

Not talking politics in the Holy Land

Randy Haluza-DeLay

Tourism is often promoted for the sake of economic development and toward the goal of breaking down stereotypes and barriers. A companion and I just returned from the Holy Land. My thoughts are filled with how our travel promotes or hides our values concerning peace and the good we wish to see in the world.

“The Holy Land”: how else to name it—Israel, Palestine, Israel-Palestine, Palestine-Israel? Any of these choices highlight certain facts and narratives, while hiding others. But, as our tour guide to the Dead Sea said when the topic of the people living in the region came up, “Let’s not talk politics.”

He was willing to talk about Bedouins and their centuries of nomadism. He would talk about ancient history—Bible geography, Roman empire, Jesus, monasteries—but wouldn’t say much about the present, even as we sat on the West Bank of the Jordan River, which is really just a creek now.

By saying he wouldn’t talk about “politics,” he certainly was engaged in political talk. The story of the Indigenous people of the Holy Land before the

return of Jews in the past century is concealed, just as Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island were obscured.

“There is some conflict,” he said, “but let’s not talk politics.”

As we drove past tourist sites in the “occupied Palestinian territories” (the United Nations term), our guide never mentioned that term, nor even the word “Palestine.” I could not find “occupied” or “disputed” (the Israeli government term) in the several guidebooks we carried. Nor was construction on the hillsides pointed out, which turned out to be Israeli settlements on the occupied land—illegal according to international law.

Our original intent had been to stay in the “safe” cities of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, but we realized the picture of the land we were getting from there was too narrow. We headed to Bethlehem, which is also in the West Bank, under Palestinian governance.

After the urban buzz of Jerusalem, I remarked about Bethlehem’s quiet to our Palestinian taxi driver. He explained, with frustration, that foreigners usually come only for a couple of

hours and mostly on scheduled tours. They don’t stay in hotels or even eat many meals. They spend most of their money in Jerusalem. A UN report noted that only 20 percent of visitors to Palestine stay overnight. “They have heard too many things, as if it is dangerous here,” our driver said. “And we Palestinians struggle even more.”

According to the website of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center, many tourists do not realize that Israel has “annexed” the tourism industry. Israel, it says, “restricts tourist access to Palestinian sites [and] favours Israeli tour companies.” Amnesty International points out that major online booking platforms offer accommodation in illegal settlements in Palestinian territory. Sabeel asks for prayer that, “tourists will make careful choices when undertaking visits to the Holy Land and especially that they will select tourist companies that refuse to profit from illegal Israeli settlements.”

I know the virulent history of antisemitism that has put Jews in danger for the entirety of the Christian era. But the operations of modern Israel follow a settler-colonial path: to take over a land and make it their own as if the land were empty or the existing people would go extinct. We Canadians are familiar with our own history claiming *terra nullius* (empty land), and the Doctrine of Discovery that legitimized oppression of Indigenous residents.

My appetite is whetted to learn more. It is time to revisit Mennonite Church Canada’s 2016 “Resolution on Palestine and Israel,” and the work of its Palestine-Israel Network (mennonitechurch.ca/pin). ☞



Randy Haluza-DeLay lives in Toronto, and can be reached at haluzadelay@gmail.com.



PHOTO BY KENNETH HAGEMeyer, FLICKR

TALES FROM THE UNENDING STORY

Deciding where to drink

Josh Penfold

Would you rather drink from the fountain of youth or the fountain of life?

Why is our culture so obsessed with the many iterations of the mythical fountain of youth? Is it a desperate desire for more time, or a chance to do over what's past? Or maybe it's a way to avoid a fear of death and a fear of aging, though I'm not sure which one is more feared? Or are we simply enamoured with the fleeting physical beauty of youth, having lost sight of the many other facets of beauty refracted in this incredible and invaluable diamond we call life?

As we continue to advance in science, like many other things, the idea of the fountain of youth may just transition from science fiction to science fact, but I'm not putting any money on it.

Admittedly, as I enter into what I think can be considered middle age, I am beginning to understand some of the allure of the fountain of youth. Beyond just the desire to shed the wrinkles and grey hairs and reclaim the beauty of youth, there's also the prospect of fewer aches and pains and pounds.

Psalm 36 speaks of a different fountain, one that doesn't promise youth, but something even more valuable.

"They take their fill from the fare of your house

and from your stream of delights you give them drink.

For with you is the fountain of life."

How much more powerful a potion to dispel the fear of death, the fear of aging, the fear of time wasted, than a fountain of life? A fountain of youth may turn back the clock in some capacity, but it's only delaying the onset of your fears.

The fountain of life, however, opens you to see differently the reality before



PAINTING BY PETER PAUL RUBENS, WIKI COMMONS

Jesus and the woman of Samaria at the well.

you. God's fountain of life need not transform your body and magically disrupt your physical nature. Though it may satisfy a deep thirst, it doesn't unnaturally reverse the reality of time. God's fountain of life provides a physical, spiritual, mental and philosophical transformation allowing us to acknowledge and embrace, the already beautiful reality of our current selves and live fully into this life, shedding us not of years but of fears.

The fountain of youth avoids our fears; the fountain of life abolishes them.

This fountain imagery carries into Jesus's ministry, when he offers living water to the woman at the well. Jesus offers water that not only forever quenches true thirst but becomes a spring of water welling up to life. And not just life but eternal life. This is not

an attempt to reclaim the lost years of youth, but a promise of abundant life in the ongoing present.

Perhaps the day of long-lasting youth is around the bend in the not-so-distant future. But seek not the fountain of youth which merely promises a previous shell; instead drink from God's fountain of life, which offers something less flashy but more potent, less popular but more meaningful, less instantly gratifying but ultimately more fulfilling and long lasting. Choose life, that you might live. ☘



Joshua Penfold lives in New Hamburg, Ontario, and can be reached at penfoldjoshua@gmail.com.

NEWS & PEOPLE

Reno with a cause

By Madalene Arias
Eastern Canada Correspondent

Cathy Abbott remembers the preacher's phrase that got her to consider taking a big step toward providing shelter for refugees arriving in Canada.

It was 2015 and Canadians were learning about the Syrian refugee crisis. The conflict had pushed millions of people to camps in neighbouring countries, with millions more displaced internally.

The Canadian government ultimately helped resettle more than 25,000 Syrian refugees between November 2015 and February 2016.

As Abbott recalls, Chris Stevens, who served as pastor at Waterloo Mennonite Brethren at the time, asked the congregation who among them was rich enough to make a difference.

She recounts him talking about people who make \$40,000 saying that if they made \$80,000 they would be okay and people making \$80,000 thinking maybe \$100,000 would be enough.

Eventually, Stevens told the congregation that if their vehicle was in a garage, that vehicle was better housed than 90

percent of the world's people. That hit her.

"Okay," Abbot thought to herself. "I can do something." She would open her home to newcomers. That would lead to a more bold step later.

She had lived alone since her husband died in 2012. She had room in her home, so she joined the Open Homes program, a church-initiated effort that involves people hosting refugees in their homes for three to six months, on average.

Between 2015 and 2019, Abbott hosted a young woman from Colombia,



SUPPLIED PHOTOS

The home Cathy Abbott shares with refugees in Waterloo, Ontario.

another young woman from the Democratic Republic of Congo, and then two families from Colombia.

By the fourth year, Abbott felt it was time for a change. While she wanted to continue to help refugees, the day-to-day reality of hosting had become overwhelming.

She decided to convert her home into a duplex and offer one suite to refugees.

"I happen to live on a nice street with a park across the street and a public school about a half a block away, so I thought, *why am I wasting this space when it could be used for a family?*" she recalls.

From December 2019 to June 2020, contractors converted her basement into a separate unit, complete with a kitchen, separate entrance, three bedrooms and a washroom.

Abbott was able to rent out the space to a new family as soon as it passed the city's inspection. She charges just over \$1,000 for the unit, less than half the average rent of a two-bedroom apartment in Waterloo.

"It just gives them a little bit of time to get on their feet," says Abbott.

"I find that it helps me too," she says. Because she lives alone, she appreciates being able to call on her renters if she needs to.

Abbott also serves as chair to the Compass Refugee Centre, which often makes referrals to the Open Homes program she once participated in.

Currently, the centre is looking after approximately 2,000 cases, with the assistance of four caseworkers. She says the need for refugee services has not slowed down. It is difficult to keep up.

"If I could convince more people to try this, then we'd probably have less of a housing problem for a lot of people," she says. ❧



Cathy Abbott's home during renovations.

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Children taken from Ukrainian families

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent

Parents in Molochansk, Ukraine, awoke one morning in May to a message from Russian authorities: “Dear parents: Evacuation has been announced at the school. Today, arrive at the school building with documents for the child and a minimum of things for a couple of weeks.”

The Mennonite Centre in Ukraine relayed this news to its supporters in one of its frequent email updates. The organization provides humanitarian aid to people in Molochansk, which is the former Molotschna Mennonite settlement, and Zaporizhzhia, the former Chortitza Mennonite settlement. Both areas are currently under Russian control.

The centre has been sending out regular communications since the war began, at first almost daily and now weekly. Its two main staff, who have had to flee the country and are working remotely, translate updates from their partner organizations in the thick of the conflict.

Investigations by organizations like the United Nations and the International Criminal Court show that countless parents throughout Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine have been forced to release their children to Russian authorities, or pressured to send their children to summer camps to escape the war. Children are taken from orphanages and other state-run institutions or abducted when their parents are killed, detained or become separated while fleeing. Children are sent to re-education camps or adopted by Russian families.

The Government of Ukraine reports that since the invasion began in February of 2022, more than 19,000 children have been abducted. Other estimates surpass 300,000.

The Mennonite Centre, which opened in 2001, has shifted from its usual work, which included buying supplies for schools, running food banks and helping



Uman Help Centre supports Ukrainians.

pay individuals’ medical costs. Now, they’re helping provide food, shelter and emergency needs to refugees within Ukrainian-held areas.

“Pre-war, we were giving humanitarian aid into the area where our ancestors used to live,” says Alvin Suderman, board chair of the Friends of the Mennonite Centre in Ukraine (FOMCU)—a separate volunteer-run organization also founded in 2001—to fundraise, raise awareness and provide support for the centre. It’s this historical interest and personal connection to the place that sparked the passion of Suderman and his fellow board members, who are located in B.C., Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Michigan. They hope to eventually move their focus back to Molochansk and Zaporizhzhia, as they’re able.

In March and April of 2022, right after Russia invaded Ukraine, FOMCU collected over \$1 million in donations, 100 percent of which went directly to helping people. They’re currently sending around \$20,000 of donations per week to aid refugees. ☞



PHOTOS COURTESY OF UMAN HELP CENTER

Assistance provided by the Uman Help Centre, a partner of the Mennonite Centre in Ukraine.

Writing career a dream come true for Winnipeg author

MaryLou Driedger talks about her new novel, *Sixties Girl*

By Aaron Epp
Senior Writer

There was no magic lamp or genie involved when MaryLou Driedger made her wish, just a felt tip marker and a famous pond.

In 1991, the Manitoba writer's family visited Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts. The Driedgers' guide invited them each to write a wish on one of the

published her first novel, *Lost on the Prairie*. It became a local bestseller and was shortlisted for the Eileen McTavish Sykes Award for Best First Book at the 2021 Manitoba Book Awards.

Now the 69-year-old author has published her second book, *Sixties Girl*. In the novel, an 11-year-old boy named Will

"When I was trying to get *Lost on the Prairie* published, I started writing these stories about growing up in the '60s," Driedger says during an interview in the condo she and her husband Dave share in Winnipeg's Exchange District.

"Teachers have told me they're looking for books that give them an opening to talk about important things with kids," she adds. To that end, *Sixties Girl* explores universal themes, including body image, cancer, romantic relationships, puberty and death. "It's not that I wrote the book to be necessarily didactic... but I think the book has important things to talk about."

Really a writer

A snowstorm in Steinbach launched Driedger's storytelling career. Driedger was in Grade 5 at the time, and her teacher instructed her and her classmates to write about the storm. Driedger's teacher was so impressed with her work that he submitted it, unbeknownst to her, to the local newspaper, *The Carillon*, which published the piece.

"That's when I felt like I was really a writer," she recalls.

Driedger was a teacher for more than 35 years and a guide at the Winnipeg Art Gallery for 10. She developed her writing career along the way.

In 1985, she began writing a weekly column in *The Carillon*. She was a columnist for the *Winnipeg Free Press* for three years, and she has contributed to numerous Mennonite publications, including *The Mennonite Mirror* and the quarterly devotional magazine *Rejoice!*

"The Mennonite church really gave me so many opportunities to write," says Driedger, who is a member at Bethel Mennonite Church.



PHOTO BY AARON EPP

rocks where the famous author Henry David Thoreau's cabin once stood. The guide said rain would wash their wishes into the pond and eventually they would come true.

Driedger wrote a wish that someday she would have a book published.

It's a wish that came true 30 years later, in May 2021, when Heritage House

discovers a suitcase full of old memories from the 1960s in his grandmother's apartment. His grandmother begins to tell him stories from her youth—stories that bring the two closer together and help Will address the problems he is facing.

Driedger drew on her own life experience to write the book, which was written for readers between the ages of 10 and 14.

Driedger also maintains a daily blog, “What’s Next?” at maryloudriedger2.wordpress.com.

In addition to giving Driedger a chance to reflect on her world travels and everyday experiences at home, the blog serves as a way for her to work through a variety of topics connected to faith. Divine healing, the interplay between faith and politics, sexual abuse in faith communities and whether or not there’s life after death are a few of the things she’s written about.

“I try to be quite frank about religion, and maybe I’m voicing some of the questions that people in the church have no matter what their age is,” she says.

Inspired by real life

Driedger’s journey to become a published novelist began in earnest in 2012 when she joined a group of Manitoba children’s writers.

As with *Lost in the Prairie*, some of Driedger’s own stories inspired *Sixties Girl*. When the pandemic began, Driedger spent time on video calls with her two grandsons in Saskatchewan and told them stories from her youth.

“Even now they make reference to the stories I told them,” she says, adding that one of the things she told them about was what it was like growing up during the Cuban Missile Crisis. “I think telling kids stories about challenges like that is important.”

“There are a lot of stories in the book about the different challenges the grandmother faced and how she overcame them,” Driedger adds. “Maybe the book can provide an opening for parents and grandparents to talk about those things with kids.”

Now that *Sixties Girl* is on shelves, Driedger is looking forward to connecting with people. She regularly visits schools, book clubs and churches to discuss her work and enjoys hearing from readers.

“For me that’s the best part [of writing],” she says. ☸

For more, see maryloudriedger.com.



News brief

Mennonites join pride parade

Five Mennonite Church Manitoba congregations—more than ever before—officially marched in the Winnipeg pride parade on June 4. Bethel Mennonite Church, First Mennonite Church, Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, Hope Mennonite Church and Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church all had banners with their names on them in the parade. River East Church, a Mennonite Brethren congregation, also took part.

Mennonites from other congregations also joined the crowd of over 10,000.

Mennonite Church Canada continues to adhere to the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, including Article 19, which states: “We believe that God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life.” A 2016 resolution also creates room for congregations to “test alternative understandings” regarding same-sex committed relationships.

MC Manitoba’s position, outlined in a statement approved by the Board in February 2023, states: “We encourage congregations to discern the Spirit’s leading for themselves regarding their welcome and affirmation of LGBTQ+ people, and this has meant that our congregations are in different places theologically and practically regarding this. We continue ‘making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace’ (Eph 4:3), recognizing that our unity in Christ is not complete uniformity of belief and practice and that diversity can be a beautiful, if sometimes surprising, gift from God.”



PHOTO BY TIM WENGER

Winnipeg pride parade.

Currently, 12 of the 41 MC Manitoba congregations are formally affirming of LGBTQ+ people. Other congregations have maintained more traditional beliefs or are in discernment processes. Others have withdrawn from MC Manitoba.

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

News briefs

101 people graduate from Ethiopian seminary

Meserete Kristos Seminary in Bishoftu, Ethiopia graduated 101 students in May. Programs included Bible and Christian Ministries, Bachelor of Arts in Christian Ministries in Amharic, degree and diplomas at satellite campuses and distance programs, and an MA program through Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. Wollega Meserete Kristos College also saw the graduation of 98 students from degree and diploma programs at its Nekemte campus.

SOURCE: MKC NEWS

Mennonite joins Colombian peace process

The World Council of Churches has appointed German Mennonite theologian Fernando Enns as one of its “observer participants” in the Colombian president’s peace process. The process includes dialogues between the government and the National Liberation Army. Enns who directs peace

studies at the University of Hamburg and Universiteit Amsterdam. “Mennonites represent an unbiased commitment to a Christian discipleship of nonviolent peace-building and reconciliation,” Enns said. “We bear a great responsibility here.”

SOURCE: ANABAPTIST WORLD

East Africa food crisis

Erratic climate patterns and extreme weather in the Horn of Africa, alongside an increase in violent conflict in Sudan, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo have exacerbated the already deteriorating food crisis in the region. Millions have been forced to flee. The UN reports that Sudan alone currently hosts over a million refugees. Canadian Foodgrains Bank is inviting donations.

SOURCE: CFGB

Mennonite-Reformed dialogue

In anticipation of the 500-year anniversary of the Anabaptist movement in Zurich in 2025, Mennonite World Conference has begun



PHOTO BY NELSON KRAYBILL

John D. Roth, César García, Thomas Yoder Neufeld and Reformed pastor Peter Detwiller cross the Limmat River in Zurich to visit Reformed and Anabaptist sites.

dialogue with the World Communion of Reformed Churches, another movement that arose in Zurich in the 1500s. Historically, the Reformed movement had “lethal hostility toward Anabaptists,” notes Thomas Yoder Neufeld of MWC. But times have changed and MWC general secretary César García says the two are now “complementary traditions.”

SOURCE: MWC

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Northern cartographer runs thriving map business

By Emily Summach
Saskatchewan Correspondent

When Dan Driediger closes his eyes, he sees rivers, rises and roads. His unique photographic memory comes in handy. Driediger is one of only seven licensed map makers, or cartographers, in Canada. He creates, prints and sells maps to people and organizations across Canada.

a request for a new map, he first extracts the data for that particular area from a Government of Canada website and then imports it into the map making program on his computer. The raw data, while complete, would not make sense to an average person. He then spends hours making sense of the information by dealing

Some of his maps have taken more than 100 hours to complete. Last year, his company sold over 5,000 maps, and he expects to sell even more this year. In the winter months, when sales are slower, he devotes his time to creating new maps. The problem, he says, is that there are always more maps to make than he has time to create.

Dan runs his business out of his home in Missinipe, Saskatchewan, 455 kilometres north of Saskatoon. Even though his remote location means a two-hour round trip to the nearest post office twice a week to mail out his maps, he wouldn't have it any other way. "I love it here, absolutely love it. I get to live where I want to live, and do my passion. Buying the company meant I got to take it by the reins and run with it."

Even in an age when most people use Google for navigation, Driediger sees value in physical, printed maps. "The difference between a paper map and looking at a digital map on your phone is that on your phone, when you look at something, you can't zoom in and see a wide area at the same time; you can't see close up while looking at the other side. . . . And what happens when you have no battery or your phone goes swimming? Why not have a waterproof map that you can leave outside all summer?" he said.

The most life-giving part of his business, he says, is the chance to travel to new regions of Canada without ever leaving his office. Often, Driediger will create new hiking and canoeing maps based on the notes and journals of fellow outdoor enthusiasts. Contacts will give him their trip journals with details such as what's around the river bend, portage locations, and portage length. "It's so much fun to go on people's trips with them and relive the journey with them. I get to go with them on their trip through their notes,"



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Dan Driediger with one of his 42-inch map printers.

Driediger, a life-long outdoor adventurer and enthusiast, began his foray into map-making in 2011. While in university, he did some casual work for a map company, squeezing work in when he "didn't want to do homework." His work in the field increased during pandemic lockdowns, and in 2021, he bought the company when the owner retired.

The process of creating a map is long and complicated. When Driediger receives

with layers, such as roads, lakes and contour lines. Then each layer is manipulated further to determine the order of layers and the thickness of the lines in each layer.

"The easiest thing I can compare it to is composing a song," says Driediger. "Each layer is like adding each instrument. Different instruments need to come in at different times and in different ways to make the final composition perfect."

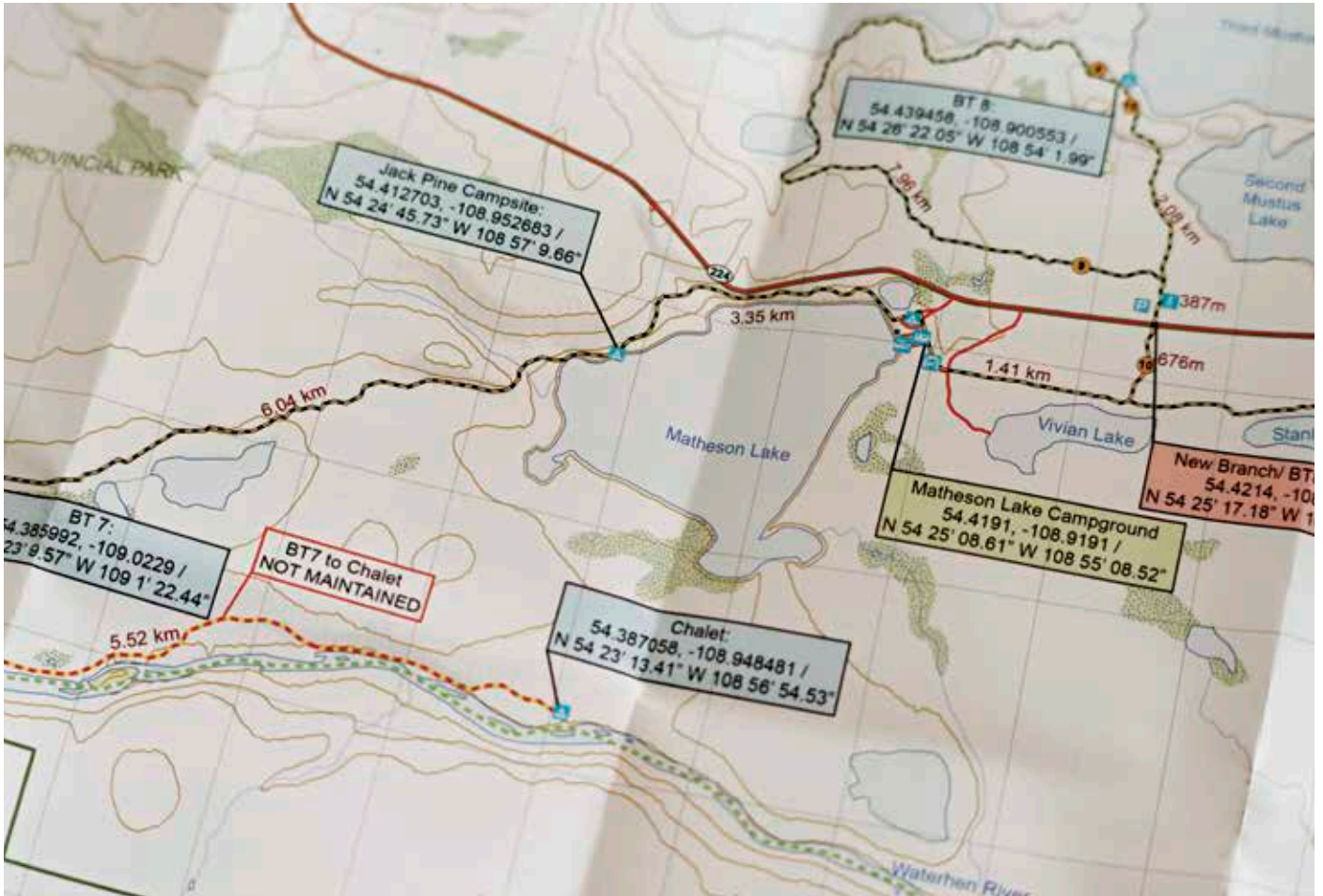


PHOTO BY TAYLOR SUMMACH

Map of the Boreal Trail East in Saskatchewan, one of Dan Driediger's favourite maps.

he said. "I can take a good set of notes of a photographic memory for locations you gotta know it through and through to and turn that into a map. I have somewhat and topography, which is perfect because make a good map." ☞

 A promotional banner for MEDA. On the left, a close-up photo of a smiling Black woman wearing a colorful headscarf. On the right, white text on a dark background reads:

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Class of '60 reunion

By Henry Fast

To the sounds of much laughter, along with moments of sadness, the Rosthern Junior College (RJC) class of 1960 met in Saskatoon on May 18-19 to mark 63 years since graduation. Given that students generally complete high school at age 18, most of us at the reunion

mourned the passing of 13 classmates. Others were not able to attend.

One person came from Toronto, three from Manitoba, a handful from Alberta and the rest from Saskatchewan.

Most of our time together was spent listening to each other share signifi-

graduation was teaching, the second farming and the third nursing.

Many present expressed how grateful they were that they had had the privilege of attending RJC. Rubbing shoulders with other students from different backgrounds (sometimes in close quarters), the dedica-



PHOTO BY HENRY SCHROEDER

Seated (left to right): Henry Fast, George Epp, Edith (Koop) Krahn, Gertrude (Janzen) deKleine, Myrna Zacharias. Standing: Henry Schroeder, Richard Epp, Peter Neufeld, Harold Epp, Sigrid (Martynes) Warkentin, Guenther Toews, Rudy Dahl (partially hidden), Evelyn (Janzen) Roden, Peter Rempel, Violet (Schapansky) Atwell, Tony Funk, Art Hildebrand, Verna (Wiens) Ewert, Ken Rempel, Edna (Friesen) Koop, Elsie (Bergen) Epp, Caroline Martens-Clappison, Ruby (Isaac) Harder, Barry Toews, Mervin Dyck (partially hidden), Eileen (Epp) Ewert, Walter Klassen, Elsbeth (Epp) Moyer, Ed Bergen.

had reached the age of 81. More than one walker and cane were noted.

Out of an original class size of 68 students, 29 were in attendance, along with 19 spouses. We remembered and

shared many interesting and significant anecdotes of our time at RJC and snapshots of our lives since our last reunion in 2010. The scheduled 2020 reunion was postponed due to COVID.

The most common occupation after

graduation was teaching, the second farming and the third nursing. Many present expressed how grateful they were that they had had the privilege of attending RJC. Rubbing shoulders with other students from different backgrounds (sometimes in close quarters), the dedica-

Pinegrove care home maintains Anabaptist values as demographics shift

By Andre Pekovich
RICHMOND, B.C.

A little-known Mennonite mission, hidden away in a quiet residential neighbourhood on the flats of Richmond, B.C., celebrated its fortieth anniversary on June 7.

Pinegrove Place, a three-storey, 76-bed residential care home, was originally built as a joint project between Mennonite Brethren and General Conference Mennonite churches in the Greater Vancouver area in 1983 to house Mennonite residents who could no longer live safely at home but didn't need the full services of an extended care facility.

Over the years, government funding models and the clientele Pinegrove serves have changed. From caring for mobile seniors who could no longer cook for themselves or clean their homes, Pinegrove now houses the elderly, disabled and those with medical conditions that prevent them from managing on their own.

Like most long-term care homes in B.C., access now is through the care registry maintained by Vancouver Coastal Health, which matches the neediest people with available beds in their area. As the population makeup of Richmond has changed, so too has the makeup of Pinegrove's residents; many are now Asian or South Asian, and there are few Mennonites.

The spiritual dimension remains, however. Even while government funding for spiritual care vanished from ever-tightening budgets, Pinegrove always funded a chaplain for the facility, one who reached out across denominational divides. All are welcome to its services and devotions.

While not officially promoting Mennonite spiritual history, Anabaptist values nonetheless remain part of the teachings. Singing together is a main mover for those attending services. It's surprising to hear so many stellar voices raised in praise as familiar hymns and praise songs ring out from residents who

formerly spoke little and moved even less.

Asians of various denominations are some of the most devoted attenders of services. Pinegrove also reaches out to connect residents of other faiths, such as Sikhism and Judaism, with representatives of their faiths to help with spiritual care.

part of the network of health care facilities in Richmond. When this group accreditation ended, Pinegrove decided to continue being accredited on its own. In the fall of 2022, Pinegrove was accredited with commendation, a stellar accomplishment for such a small facility.



PHOTO BY FRANK DAWSON

Pinegrove Place in Richmond, B.C.

Pinegrove was an extension of the Vancouver housing project of Menno Court, a 170-unit low-income residence for seniors in East Vancouver. It was originally built to house Mennonites, particularly widows, whose means were limited in the days when pensions were not readily available and social assistance was frowned on.

Built by Mennonite builders and their crews, all drawn together under the leadership of Walter Goertz, the project was completed for \$4 million, nearly 10 percent under budget. It drew many of its first staff and management from the Mennonite community. In its 40 years, Pinegrove has been led by Fred Hildebrand, Gordon Milner and now Lori Sidjak.

Pinegrove was initially accredited as

The board has always maintained its connection with its Mennonite roots and strives to infuse Anabaptist values in all the work of care performed there. About half the board are from Mennonite Church B.C., and half Mennonite Brethren. The current chair is Lorna Goertz, daughter of Walter Goertz.

Pinegrove held a celebration on June 7 with its 76 residents and families, retired staff and board members, local politicians and community partners to mark 40 years of elder care taking place quietly in their community. ❧

Andre Pekovich is a board member of Pinegrove Place. If you are interested in volunteering at Pinegrove, contact info@pinegroveplace.com.

A safe-ish consumption site

By David Driedger

This spring it dawned on me that our front yard occasionally functions as a safe-ish consumption site.

Almost 10 years ago we bought a small church in Winnipeg's West End and renovated it to be our home. The exterior looks basically the same, so from the beginning a trickle of people have assumed it is still a church and therefore a quasi-public space. Sometimes people knock on the door or sit on the steps to visit or have a bite to eat.

In all this time we've never had an issue, other than a bit of garbage left here or there. Some mornings I come out and a few things look moved or out of place. Curiosity got the better of me and I eventually installed some cameras around the house. I check the footage occasionally. One day I watched the recording from the night before, which showed two people entering our yard. One of them slowly and carefully unscrewed our outdoor lights (not breaking any) until there was a dark corner where he and his friend could—well, they were just off camera, so I don't know what they did. It wasn't hard for me to connect the dots though, as over the years I've found traces of booze, drugs and sex.

One morning this spring it was finally warm enough to comfortably have a coffee outside before work. A young woman looking a little worse for wear walked through the gate. She asked if she could come inside. I said I needed to go to work soon but she could have a seat in the yard if she wanted. She sat down and we talked a little. She said she had to get out of her apartment block. She asked for water. She asked for my name. Then she turned away from me and I went back to reading.

I looked up a few minutes later and she appeared to be preparing a needle for injection. While we've picked up the occasional needle in the past, witnessing someone shoot up was a first for me. It felt weird but I let her finish. She carefully cleaned up after herself. We wished each other well and parted ways.



PHOTO BY AARON EPP

David Driedger's house in Winnipeg.

Drug use and addiction continue to rise. The most recent data I've seen shows that those living in downtown Winnipeg have a life expectancy 20 years lower than the rest of the city's population. What is to be done? There are policies, supports and laws that could make a massive difference in people's lives, but there is no collective or political will to institute them. Nearly every space is marked by effective exclusionary practices that marginalize those most in need of support. We in turn justify these boundaries in the name of our own safety.

Somehow our yard has become a small transitional and safe-ish space for those with few options. I'm no saint and this is not a solution, but it is a reminder that common spaces and safe consumption sites are both possible and needed.

I try not to be heavy-handed when talking with my 13-year-old son about these things, but he is perceptive. One day he talked about the danger that exists in other neighbourhoods. I thought maybe

he viewed the realities of our neighbourhood through rose-coloured glasses, but then I realized what he was talking about.

He saw that it was okay for strangers to land in our yard and take a load off for a bit, but he also realized what would happen if some of these folks landed in the lawns and on the front steps in nearly any other neighbourhood in the city. He understood such a person would likely not be safe there. He understood the latent violence of other neighbourhoods.

Our entire public discourse as a city is centered around the "safety" of those who are already the safest, while we fear and ridicule those who suffer most. Questions of safety are real, but we have the wrong framework for assessing them. When the prophet Jeremiah told exiles to seek the welfare of the city he was clear on how it would work, stating, "In its welfare you will find your own." ❧

David Driedger is the leading minister at First Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.

The sky ablaze

Alberta man recounts recent evacuations due to wildfires

By Emily Summach
Alberta Correspondent

Art Koop was cleaning up after teaching his last class of the day when the emergency alert blared from his cell phone. The message called for an immediate, mandatory evacuation. A wildfire threatened Edson, Alberta, the community where Koop lives and works. The sky was an eerie orange colour and thick with smoke.

Koop, his wife, and their three children moved to Edson in 2021. The town of 8,500 is located along the Yellowhead Highway, halfway between Edmonton and Jasper.

The fire season in Alberta has been especially active this year: 842,000 hectares (over 2 million acres) of land have burned. Even though the community was aware of the nearby fires, the evacuation alert on May 5 still came as a surprise. Koop,

who teaches culinary arts at the local high school, had delivered baked goods to the evacuation centre in Edson earlier that week. “Edson was a safe zone,” he said. “I didn’t think we’d be the ones evacuating, considering we’d been supporting other evacuees.”

The smoke levels steadily increased throughout the day of the evacuation. The inside of Koop’s school was hazy, as the HVAC system couldn’t keep up with clearing the air. While many areas were on alert for a potential evacuation, Koop knew it was serious when the call was for immediate evacuation. The encroaching wildfire was 11 kilometres away.

Koop and his family took their two vehicles and left home. “The fact that our evacuation was immediate certainly



PHOTO COURTESY OF ART KOOP

‘I didn’t think we’d be the ones evacuating’ says Art Koop.

raised the level of intensity. There is only one highway out of Edson [not blocked by the fire], so we joined the long lineup of cars to get fuel, and then joined the long line of cars heading out of town,” he said. “All you could do was get in the line and just pray. Everyone was in the same boat. It takes a long time to move that many people out on one highway.”

The experience reminded him of the images he saw on the news during the Fort McMurray wildfire in 2016.

The Koops spent the night near Jasper. The following day, they learned that the Jasper area’s power grid was in jeopardy due to the fires. Officials asked evacuees to leave the area. The family headed to Calgary, and spent the next few days with friends.

Edson was spared the worst. Some residents in rural areas of the town lost outbuildings, but the town itself experienced no significant impacts. Residents were allowed to return home on May 8.

That lasted until June 9, when residents were again ordered to evacuate. As of June 14, the wildfire continues to burn within 1.5 kilometres of Edson’s southern boundary.

Koop and his family are back in Calgary. “We’re a bit discombobulated,” he says. “We’re hopeful that we will come back to a town that is intact.” ❧



PHOTO BY ART KOOP

Skies ablaze over the airtanker base in Edson, Alberta on May 5.

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One of the privileges I have had during my time at Menno Simons is being able to participate as a “Mustang” in every sports program that is offered to the junior high students. These sports included basketball, volleyball, track and field, badminton, cross-country running, and golf. Many of my best memories of school have been made with my friends and teammates while playing sports in school tournaments around the city and in southern Alberta.

The most important aspect of all our sports teams is the sportsmanship and respect taught and modelled by every one of our coaches and athletic staff. Much of this comes from our beliefs as a school, being a strong Mennonite community and knowing the importance of God in every aspect of our lives, including sports. Prayer before and after games and practices, knowing how to handle yourself while under pressure or frustrated, perseverance when tired, and working as a team are excellent examples of lessons learned during my time as a Mustang. These things will not only help me in sports, but also beyond athletics and into life beyond Menno Simons.

Our coaches, parents, and teachers make our athletic program successful. I have had the opportunity to learn from so many different coaches who have played sports much longer than I have and are willing to pass on what they know. My teammates and I have learned so much and I am so thankful for the time

Go Mustangs!

By Caleb Sully
Menno Simons Christian School
CALGARY, ALTA.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MENNO SIMONS
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Preston (left), Joshua, Caleb and Cole enjoy the camaraderie of sports.

and effort they have given to our athletes.

To my coaches and teachers, I say, “You have made my journey as a Mustang something I will remember not for what we won, but for what we did together as a team and the lessons we learned.”

Caleb Sully is a grade nine student at Menno Simons Christian School.

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How do we build the lives of our youth on a rock? This is where Christian education can supplement the church in growing faith. Building a personal relationship with God is everyday stuff. Young people may not be at church every week, but they spend more waking hours at school than anywhere else.

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slowly, but grow strong. At UMEI, we are not there just to teach history and robotics. We are there when someone’s dog dies, when they get into the university program they desperately wanted, when they fail their driver’s test, or have a panic attack. We are able to show them that God is there through all of it. It isn’t about forcing God into their lives, but about showing them how God is already there.

Young people today need to know a God they can’t live without, a Spirit within them that is deeper than self-esteem mantras and a positive mindset. As it says in 1 Corinthians, we lay a foundation, and someone else is building on it. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. At UMEI, we are proud to be co-workers in God’s service of building this foundation.



UMEI PHOTO

Young people need to build their lives on a rock.

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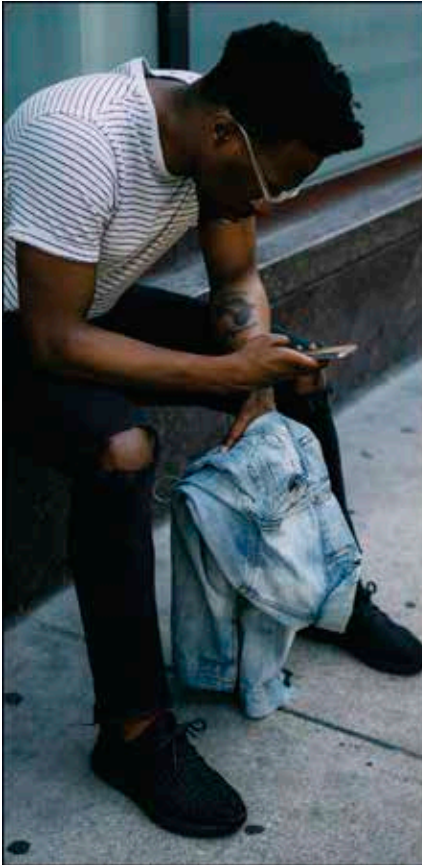
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Digital issues for the summer slowdown

The magazine will print one issue in July, one in August and one in September during our annual summer slowdown, but subscribers are eligible to receive a digital issue by email in two-week intervals.

If you already receive digital delivery throughout the year, you **do not** need to sign up again.

To add digital issues to your subscription, at no extra cost, please visit canadianmennonite.org/subscribe/manage.

CANADIAN MENNONITE

News brief

Mennonite Church Manitoba pastoral transitions

Selenna Wolfe will be the associate pastor at Hope Mennonite Church in Winnipeg beginning on August 1. The part-time position will focus on children and youth ministry.

Wolfe spent the last several years working at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) as administrative assistant and receptionist for the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives and Gallery. She previously worked at Camps with Meaning for eight summers, two of which she spent as the Bible instructor. She also wrote the camp's Bible curriculum for a summer.

Wolfe holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in biblical and theological studies from CMU and will be starting chaplaincy training at the Selkirk Mental Health Centre in fall. Wolfe's arrival at Hope Mennonite comes after Ellis Hamm served as interim associate pastor for six months, concluding their term this spring.

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE



Selenna Wolfe

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Calendar

International

Oct. 22 – Nov. 1, 2023: Join Mennonite Central Committee Colombia on a 10-day learning tour to discover the peace and development work in Bogota and the countryside. For more information, please contact Rosie Steinmann at rosiesteinmann@mcccanada.ca, or fill out the form.

British Columbia

Oct. 20-22: MC B.C. women's retreat.
March 11-14, 2024: Mennonite Camping Association is hosting its bi-national gathering at Camp Squeah in Hope. More information to come.

Saskatchewan

June 17: MCC Saskatchewan relief sale, at Forest Grove Community Church, Saskatoon, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Activities for all ages.
June 22: RJC High School presents the musical, "All Shook Up." RSVP to admissions@rjc.sk.ca
Sept. 17: Shekinah Retreat Centre move-a-thon.

Manitoba

June 24: Steinbach in Fiction at 7 p.m. at The Public Brewhouse and Gallery, Steinbach, MB. Three authors with Steinbach roots and books out or launching soon get together to discuss their work and that of others. Admission is free.
July 14-15: The Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies and the University of Manitoba present "The Russlaender Mennonites: War dislocation and new beginnings" centenary conference to mark the arrival of Russlaender from the Soviet Union to Canada.
July 15: "Singing our Journey: Sangerfest 2023," at the Manitoba Centennial Concert Hall. Sign up to

sing in the mass choir celebrating the centenary of the Russlaender immigration to Canada. For more information, visit mhsc.ca/soj.

Ontario

June 25: The MacTalla Road Duo will be performing their traditional Celtic styling songs at 2:30 p.m. at the Detweiler Meetinghouse (3445 Rosedale Rd, Ayr). Admission by donation.
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.
July 14: Cheryl Denise will read her plainspoken and often humorous poetry at RiverSong, on Hawkesville Road west of St. Jacobs, at 7 p.m. Her readings will be complemented with singing by Jim and Charlie Bauman. Doors open at 6 p.m. for food and beverages.
Oct. 21: MCEC Youth Event at UMEI, 1-5p.m. at UMEI Christian High School in Leamington, Ont.
Oct. 28: Voices Together Resource Day, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at Shantz Mennonite Church, in Baden, Ont., with hymn sing at 7 p.m.

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

For more Calendar listings visit, canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar.



Classifieds Employment Opportunities



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Aug. 11 <i>Digital Issue</i>	July 31
Aug. 25	Aug. 14
Sept. 8 <i>Digital Issue</i>	Aug. 28



PHOTO BY WILL BRAUN

Maxime Bernier—former Conservative cabinet minister from Quebec, and now leader of the People's Party of Canada—ran in the federal by-election in southern Manitoba, basing his campaign in the heart of Mennonite country. This image is from a June 10 rally in Winkler, where the big-city francophone politician has won the hearts of a surprising number of Mennonites.