

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

July 28, 2023 Volume 27 Number 15



## Humans and Humus

A family pursuit of subsistence

### INSIDE

Million-dollar fraud hits Winnipeg church 16

Mennonite Centre under Russian control 19

Ex-prisoners plant church 21

# Of beets and chainsaws

WILL BRAUN

editor@canadianmennonite.org



If integrity is the currency of change, the Wiederkehr family of Mildmay, Ontario should have a chunk of change to spend.

In a world of compromise, greenwashing and homesteaders Instagramming their idealism, the Wiederkehers have done far more than most to actually extract themselves from the consumerist machine that treats earth as waste bin and soul as credit card.

I too have sweated and fretted down the DIY, grow-your-own, pedal-powered path, but I know of no one who pushes that experiment further than Ruth, Miles, and their two post-university sons, Theo and Andre.

I almost missed it though.

In January, Andre sent an email with a somewhat vague proposal for a column on faith and Creation. My response bordered on rude. Not knowing anything about him, I wrote about 20 years of church talk on Creation: “I find a lot of repetition and a lot of people preaching to the proverbial choir.” Reaching full preacher mode, I continued: “I want to see the church make a wildly courageous and creative contribution in this realm.”

In short: No column, but I’d (grudgingly) consider individual submissions.

Andre’s response was gracious. He liked the “wildly courageous” part.

Then, fortunately, I looked him up online. I learned that, like my family, the Wiederkehers heat with wood, but unlike my family, they sold their chainsaw. Full attention.

Though my 13-year-old son had suggested we do the same, and though I know the perversely sweet smell of those little two-stroke engines is calamity for the atmosphere, I accept the compromise without question. Still, I’m fully intrigued by chainsaw-free conviction.

The chainsaw was just one example my search revealed of the Wiederkehers’ degree of conviction.

“Forget my last email,” I wrote back. “I didn’t know your story. Take two: How much firewood do you saw by hand? . . . And most importantly, can I bring my family to visit?”

While in Ontario for work and family visits last spring, we spent a few hours at the Wiederkehr farm northwest of Waterloo. We strolled through the barn, the garden, the cedar bog, the woodworking shed, the bike/tractor shed and the seed collection corner before sitting down for a meal to remember.

The Wiederkehers are soft-spoken and understated, not natural self-promoters. But their hospitality is so warm and their actions so compelling that a visit cannot help but embed itself in a visitor’s heart and mind.

Much of what I saw and heard there, I had not seen or heard anywhere else. Ever.

At the woodworking shed—where Andre was fashioning a curved-front, wooden toboggan by hand, starting with logs from out back—he noted a snow scoop he had made entirely from wood and sinew. Nothing from the lumber yard.

It took me a moment to realize he had made it in response to a winter phone conversation in which I noted that my son—the anti-chainsaw one—had shamed me into not using our gas-powered snow blower on our 70-metre driveway and ice rink all winter. On this one point, we had outdone the snow-blowing Wiederkehers.

Andre, apparently, responded by making a snow shovel. I can’t top that. (Though I can give you a good deal on a snow blower.)

I appreciated their utter lack of defensiveness in acknowledging the inconsistencies in their lives. I appreciated their varied degrees of conviction on the question of home-grown vitamin D versus fortified foods off the shelf. I appreciated the sense of good-natured, intense debate among them. I appreciated that Theo admitted he was weary of beet salad, a winter staple. I appreciated the almost ridiculous rigour and irresistible gentleness of their lives.

And I marveled that they do all this as a family.

Since that trip, the Wiederkehers regularly come up in our family conversations. They’re a household name, in the best possible sense.

What they are doing matters. From firewood and beets to snow shovels and wild courage, theirs is an exploration of faith and Mennonite values that offers value for us all. We at *Canadian Mennonite* magazine believe their stories and analysis belong in these pages. They will be writing every two months under the title of “Humans and Humus,” starting on page 6. ☺



Funded by the  
Government  
of Canada

ISSN 1480-042X

Canada



# CONTENTS

July 28, 2023 / Vol. 27, No. 15

## ABOUT THE COVER

Andre (left), Ruth, Miles and Theo Wiederkehr on their farm near Mildmay, Ontario.

PHOTO BY WILL BRAUN

## Million-dollar fraud hits Winnipeg church 16

Aaron Epp reports on an affinity fraud case at Bethel Mennonite.

## Bus tour visits Stó:lō sites in B.C. 17

Amy Rinner Waddell sees a region of her home province through another lens.

## Mennonite Centre building under Russian control 19

Janet Dirks reports on the front-line work of relief in war-torn Ukraine.

## Ex-prisoners plant church 21

Niguse Bekele shares about the fruit of prison ministry in Ethiopia



## Humans and Humus 6

How possible is it disengage from the hyper-consumerism engulfing the earth and our souls? The Wiederkehr family is finding out.

## Regular features:

What in the World 4 For discussion 8 Readers write 9 Milestones 11 Calendar 30 Classifieds 30

## Executive road trip Michael Pahl 12

## The three blessings of June 17 Ed Olfert 13

## Talking about leisure Randy Haluza-DeLay 14

## Mightier than the mountains of prey Joshua Penfold 15

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

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

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

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

### Please send all material to be considered for publication to

General submission address: submit@canadianmennonite.org

Readers Write: letters@canadianmennonite.org

Milestones announcements: milestones@canadianmennonite.org

Calendar announcements: calendar@canadianmennonite.org

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 40063104 REGISTRATION NO. 09613

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

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

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

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

### Canadian Mennonite Staff

Publisher: Tobi Thiessen, publisher@canadianmennonite.org

Editor: Will Braun, editor@canadianmennonite.org

Managing Editor: 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: Emily Summach, ab@canadianmennonite.org

Saskatchewan Correspondent: Emily Summach, sk@canadianmennonite.org

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

Eastern Canada Correspondent: Madalene Arias, ec@canadianmennonite.org

### One-Year Subscription Rates

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

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

### Subscriptions/address changes

office@canadianmennonite.org

1-800-378-2524 ext. 1



PHOTO BY CLICKRBEE, FLICKR

## Supreme Court supports sabbath

Gerald Groff of Pennsylvania sued his employer, USPS, for requiring him to work Sundays to deliver Amazon packages. He argued his right to a sabbath. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in his favour, saying “employers must do more than the minimum to accommodate workers’ religious observance.”

Source: Religion News Service

## Church offers money-back guarantee on tithing

The largest church in America recognizes that giving away 10 percent of one’s income can be intimidating, so Life.Church (that’s not a typo) invites first-time tithers to try it for three months and look for God’s faithfulness during that time. If they don’t see it, they can request their tithe be returned.

Source: Relevant



PHOTO BY VAGUELY ARTISTIC, FLICKR

## Artificial amen

A Lutheran church in Germany used an AI chatbot to select hymns and prayers and even compose and deliver a sermon. While most people in most pews probably prefer a human behind the pulpit, AI is proving highly useful in Bible translation around the world.

Source: Religion News Service

Photo: C-3PO by Lucasfilm, OpenClipart-Vectors from Pixabay



## Smithsonian hymns and games

Mennonite four-part hymn-singing was celebrated at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in July. Singers from progressive and conservative backgrounds sang on the National Mall in Washington D.C. Attendees were invited to sing along and join a yard-sized game of Dutch Blitz.

Source: Anabaptist World

Photo: National Mall by Matti Blume, Wikipedia Commons



## 50 YEARS AGO

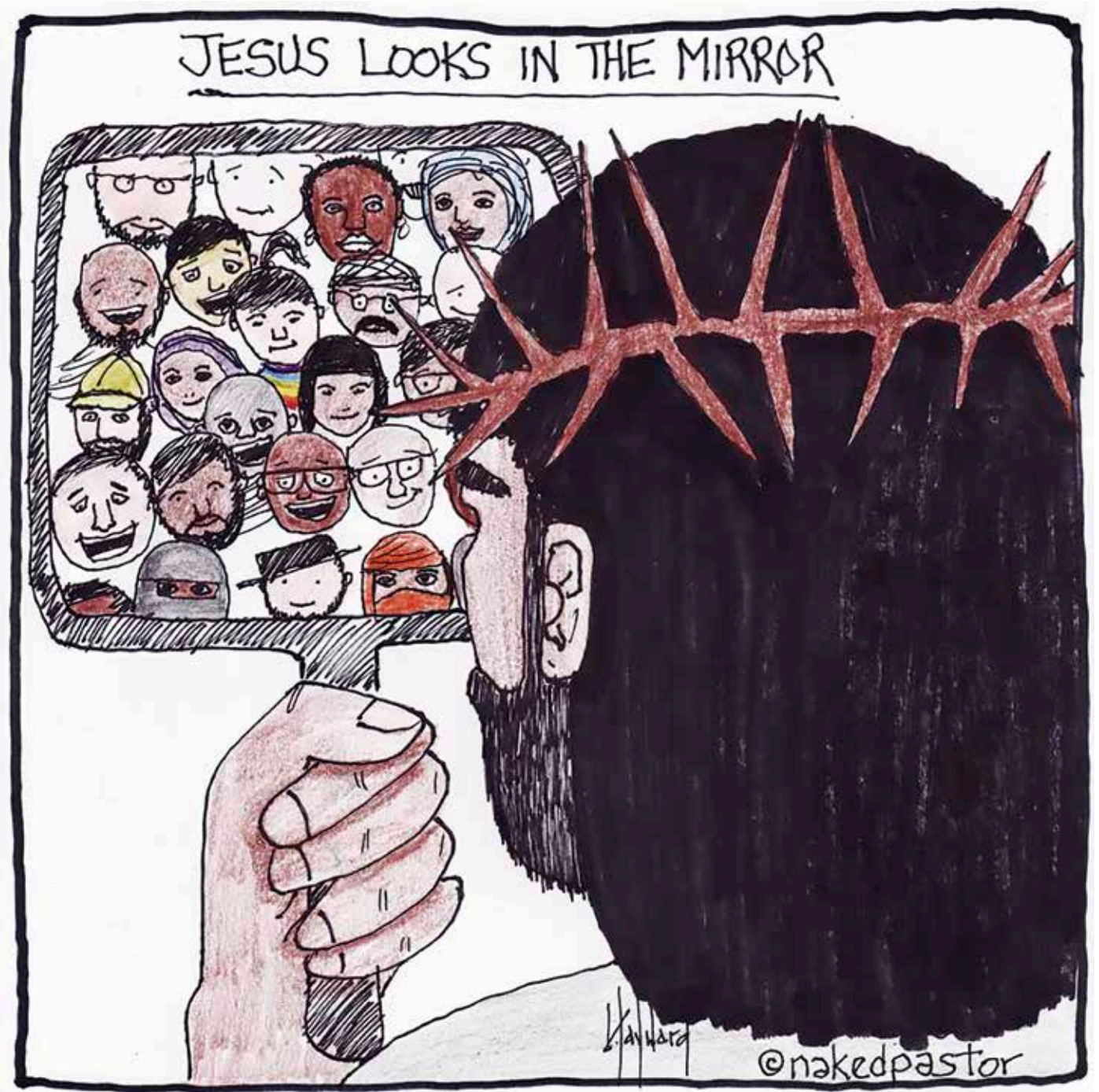


PHOTO COURTESY OF LOMBARD  
Mennonite Church

*Emma Richards.*

In 1973, Emma Richards became the first woman to be ordained and installed as a minister in what is now Mennonite Church USA. While Ann Allebach had been ordained in 1911, she was not installed in a pastorate. Richards became pastor at Lombard Mennonite Church in Lombard, Illinois, where she had been guest-preaching for years.





## FEATURE

# Humans and Humus

A family pursuit of subsistence

Part I

By Andre Wiederkehr

On a hundred hilly acres near Mildmay, Ontario, the Wiederkehr family is quietly pushing the limits of human energy, spiritual integrity and disconnection from the consumerist web.

The following is the first in a series of bi-monthly dispatches from our family.

If you were to visit my family's home and stroll about with a sharp eye (consider yourself invited to do so), you'd notice some peculiar contrasts. In our ageing farmhouse, a conventional electric stove sits unused in the kitchen while we cook on a wood-burning rocket stove outside. We grow nearly all our own food, including carbs and protein, but we also buy a few foods we don't really need.

My brother, my parents and I do a lot of our work using the strength of our bodies, but we also use a tractor for some jobs. There's a much-used flock of bikes in our shed and a car in the driveway with a cobweb in the angle of the door mirror.

I hope the incongruities that a visitor might notice would raise questions: What are these people trying to do? Why? What implications does that have for this place, and also for other places and the people who live in them?

Such questions arise naturally when one is faced by people making unusual choices. But actually, my family thinks that everyone, everywhere, should be asking such questions of themselves.

The systems that support the lives of nearly all present-day humans cannot be sustained. Especially in places like Canada, many of us consume and waste on far too large a scale. More subtly, but perhaps more importantly, we frequently fail to fit our consumption and waste into natural cycles. Even if we were to cut back, our systems still couldn't be sustained.

Our systems are unloving in two ways. They cause great harm through exploitation and pollution, and they are a cultural dead end by which we claim privileges of comfort, security and power that others won't be able to have.

As a family, we feel our faith calls us to reimagine these systems so they can be sustained in an ecological sense

while also being just. In the process, we end up grappling with a lot of complexities and compromises. We have a lot to discuss while weeding together in the garden.

## Facing responsibilities

In this series of articles, we will share about how we live and why.

Do not mistake these for sketches of an idyllic "simple life." Sitting in front of a glowing wood stove in winter is nice, but ever since we sold our chainsaw, our sore sawing muscles have put that comfort into perspective.

Instead of simplifying our own lives by ignoring problems and our complicity in them, we seek to examine and refashion our motives, goals, choices and actions. As we scale up our gardening, plastic drip tape, plastic mulch and row covers would come in handy, but we know those things would just be sweeping our problems under someone else's carpet. We resist these temptations with reluctance and a degree of hypocrisy. For now, our gardens are still protected from varmints by electric fence.

We make these choices in light of our faith. The ways we choose to live can look simple, but in a way, facing the consequences of your decisions is the most complex way to live.

As physical creatures, humans receive what we need for life from the physical world: air, water, earth and living creatures. I'll call this "land." It is not our dependence on land that has caused our present mess—we cannot resign from this dependence except by death. Rather, the problem is our misuse of land, our displacement of costs to land elsewhere, and our greed in taking too much.

Being alive leaves us with the responsibility to choose which land to depend on and how it will be treated.

It is normal in our culture to sidestep responsibility for



these choices by simply buying items off a shelf and leaving the details to people unseen and unknown. In practice, those others usually cannot or will not take on our responsibilities. This leaves a moral gap in which shortcuts abound. Mainstream environmental “solutions” such as electrified transportation or buying local food reliably fall into this trap.

Part of the reason we as a family have chosen to work with this specific plot of land is that we are accepting the complexity of choice. We seek to not offload our responsibility onto others, but to own the choices about how our lives will be supported.

### Far away for God

The story of how our family came to this place and to this way of living can be told in two ways: as a continuous, gradual process or as a discontinuous conversion, a profound shift. Both contain truth and can be found woven into the story that

follows.

My name is Andre. My brother is Theo. Our parents are Ruth Isaac and Miles Zimmerly. We all share the last name *Wiederkehr*, chosen by my parents when they married. In German, it means “return.” Humans often move apart, away, breaking apart rather than building up; this name reminds us to return again and again to each other and to our commitments, including our faith and what it asks of us.

My parents both grew up on fairly conventional, fairly small farms, Ruth in the Niagara region of Ontario and Miles in Wayne County, Ohio. Both grew up in and joined Mennonite congregations.

My dad trained in agronomy, then spent three years with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in Bangladesh. My mom served with MCC’s SALT program and studied theology in Winnipeg. They then went to Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Indiana, where they met. They married during

Ruth’s first pastorate, in Saskatoon. Following that, they moved with MCC to the L’Arche-style farm community at Ignatius Jesuit Centre near Guelph, Ontario. Theo was born there in 1997.

I was born two years later in Hamilton, where Ruth had taken a pastoral position at Welcome Inn. In 2001, we moved back to Ignatius, where Miles farmed for the Jesuits until that position was discontinued.

In 2007, my parents decided it was time to follow my mother’s childhood sense of calling to “go far away for God.” We went to Cambodia with MCC for three years.

Living in Cambodia showed us that the North American norm is not the only way to live, and that we often confuse our wants for needs. We also came to see many connections between North Americans’ choices and harms in other places.

Each of us feels differently about the value of our time in Cambodia as we



SUPPLIED PHOTO

*The Wiederkehr family applying compost to a dry corn breeding experiment.*

weigh it against the environmental harms and cultural/racial problems inherent in that way of trying to help people. But we all agree that the experience continues to shape the thinking behind decisions on issues such as how to cook or get around.

### Continuity and conversion

On our return to Canada, my parents decided it was time to follow my father's dream of finding a farm. In April of 2011, we moved to the 100 acres where we now live, about 90 kilometres northwest of Waterloo. Here, we established a small farm business selling meat and eggs. We became a part of Hanover Mennonite Church, where we continue to be active members.

After high school, Theo and I both went to the University of Waterloo, living as a part of the Conrad Grebel University College community. Theo took Peace and Conflict Studies and I studied General Science and a lot of other things. During that period, our family went through major shifts in perspective. We began a rapid move away from the farm business we had been running and toward subsistence farming. While the two are fundamentally different, it's unlikely that we would ever have ended up where we are without the background in more normal farming.

After graduating, Theo and I decided to return home to make subsistence the goal of our full-time work. Both affirmed and challenged by this complicated gift, our parents have been changing what they do so that they can work with us in this direction. Among other changes, my dad quit his off-farm job and my mom has been working on accommodating her dietary restrictions within what we can grow.

Our various church involvements over the years have helped make us who we are, but we also find ourselves at odds with how the church is actually practising the values that have been formed in us. While the work we now choose looks very different from our past involvements, we see it as part of a long tradition of Mennonite values and beliefs. Our



PHOTO BY WILL BRAUN

### *The woodworking shop.*

way of living out Menno-nite values is our response to problems we see in the church's conventional ways of working.

### Comparing notes

Remember the incongruous combination of practices I described at the start of the

article? In light of that, I want to note two things.

One is that we're trying to learn many new skills and design a lot of new systems as we walk the path toward living sustainably. It's a lot of work and that work will happen faster, better, and with less loneliness if it's shared. If you are experimenting with or know how to weave fabric or grow cover-crop seed using hand tools or design a solar cooker, we'd love to learn from you. If you'd like to hear more about a skill we mention so that you can try it, we'd love to share what we've learned.

Second, we are in the midst of transition. We have not nearly arrived at sustainable and just ways of living; don't mistake us for a finished project. But, as I hope will become clear in future instalments of "Humans and Humus," we have already changed profoundly and swiftly, and this realization is key. Change is possible for ordinary people like us, and you.

We're nervous to share where we're at. On the one hand, we're not far enough in our journey, and on the other hand, we're so far along that we worry about scaring people off. So we thank you for engaging with our ideas and stories. ❧

### /// For discussion

1. What would it take for you and your family to be self-sufficient? How much of your own food do you grow?
2. Andre Wiederkehr says, "Especially in places like Canada, many of us consume and waste on far too large a scale." Do you agree? If you were forced to reduce what you use, where would you start?
3. Buying items off the shelf means we usually do not know how ethically the items were produced. How concerned should we be about these ethical shortcuts?
4. Do you think the Wiederkehr venture is something that others should try? What is the biggest obstacle?

—By Barb Draper

See related resources at  
[www.commonword.ca/go/2417](http://www.commonword.ca/go/2417)

**CommonWord**  
 Bookstore and Resource Centre



## /// Readers write

### Be in Touch

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

### ✉ In defense of dandelions

I feel compelled to suggest, in a brotherly fashion, that Brother Buddy Andres re-examine his “different strokes for different folks” stance vis-a-vis dandelions, in which he wishes for a heaven without dandelions (June 30, letters).

Is there a more splendid example of *Compositae* inflorescence than the dandelion? Is there a more enthusiastic, hardpan-busting taproot, that mines deep mineral deposits and brings fertility to tired soils, than dandelions?

How many dandelion bouquets are bequeathed to loving parents with no complaints from the gardeners?

May I humbly suggest that the Creator decided that dandelions have their place and are (very?) good, horticulturalists notwithstanding.

FREDERIC WIELER, OAKVILLE, ONTARIO

### ✉ To sanction, or not

I commend you on your editorial of June 16 (“The duty of tension”), and its examination of Maxime Bernier’s platform and audience. Most of Canada’s media would not cover Bernier, unless they were forced to by circumstances, or had stumbled onto a particularly damning bit of information.

You also break ranks with the mass media by actually indicating some of Bernier’s platform. You state: “His appeal is simple: family values. He speaks about a ‘cult of death,’ referring to abortion and medical assistance in dying.”

Bernier [leader of the People’s Party of Canada] is indeed a little scary, as he challenges the consortium formed by the three major political parties back in the ‘60s. Those parties have all adopted an aggressive anti-family, anti-parent, anti-child, anti-female, anti-male, anti-heterosexual and anti-freedom of speech policy, and they sanction those who don’t emphatically agree with them.

KEVIN MCCABE, ST. CATHARINES, ONTARIO (GRACE MENNONITE CHURCH)

### ✉ The face of grace

I’ve been following the polarization dilemma for many years. It is unfortunate how divisive this has become in our

churches and among families and friends. It is then with great appreciation that I read the editor’s thoughtful perspective on “The duty of tension” (June 16). Living gracefully together cannot happen without deliberate intent.

Will Braun makes a challenging statement when he says, “turning my face toward my neighbour reminds me of the duty of tension.” We have a reminder of this also in the age-old priestly blessing: “The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.”

Being gracious to each other may be a perspective we can all endorse.

WALTER PAETKAU, ABBOTSFORD, B.C. (LANGLEY MENNONITE FELLOWSHIP)



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS PHOTO

*Moses surveys the promised land.*

### ✉ Indigenous to Israel?

Further to “Not talking about politics in the Holy Land” (June 16) and the reply from *Honest Reporting Canada* in the letter, “Israel is not a ‘settler-colonial’ state” (June 30), I think the letter’s statement that Israel is the “indigenous homeland” of the Jewish people is a bit of a stretch. The land was occupied when Israel began its post-Exodus conquest. The biblical details of that conquest, involving the goal of a complete eradication of the existing population down to every “man, woman and child,” is hard to read without some emotional discomfort.

Furthermore, the fact that Christianity, for the most part,

has accepted that brutal usurpation of land as God's will and doing should be pause for reflection. Is it any different from that which was mandated by the Doctrine of Discovery?

HUGO PETERS, WINNIPEG (BETHEL MENNONITE CHURCH)

---

### ✉ A short history of hymn books

**I very much appreciated Anneli Loepp Thiessen's "Voices and Stories" column about the hymnody in *Voices Together*.** The background stories give life to the hymns.

It continues to amaze me how putting new words to an old tune brings a new life to the hymn. A good example is the first hymn in *Voices Together*, "Summoned by the God who made us." It also gives me cause to ponder how and why the opening hymns for our series of hymnals were chosen. Our hymnody is our singing faith, and these anchor songs at the beginning of a hymnal point to purposes, arrangement and themes that follow.

*The Church Hymnal* (the black one, 1927) begins with, "Come Thou Almighty King." Verse four concludes with the assertion: "To the great one in three, eternal praises be." Sections on God, Christ and the Spirit follow. Clearly trinitarian theology was consciously included.

*The Mennonite Hymnal* (red, 1969) starts with, "Holy God, We Praise Thy Name." Verse four begins with, "Holy Father, Holy Son, Holy Spirit, three we name Thee." The hymns which follow are arranged with respect to the persons of the Trinity.

Then something changes. In *Hymnal: A Worship Book* (blue, 1992) the contents are arranged according to the order of service in worship, not theological themes. The Trinity was no longer the cohering principle. The opening song, "What is this Place," seems to be a disclaimer about specifically sanctified worship spaces, then goes on, nonetheless, to make significant statements about how we connect with the sacred even in this ordinary common place.

*Voices Together* (purple, 2020), begins with the summons to gather as God's people "in all our rich diversity, richer still in unity," thus bringing a new church into being, a church of justice, peace and inclusivity. The focus is perhaps less on orthodoxy (right belief) as it is on orthopraxy (right actions and relationships). No doubt the hymnal contains both aspects as a unified whole in this version of our singing faith.

MAURICE MARTIN, NEW HAMBURG, ONTARIO  
(MANNHEIM MENNONITE CHURCH)

---

### ✉ Intergenerational trauma?

**In reading "Project explores legacy of 1920s trauma on Mennonite women" by Sherry Sawatzky-Dyck (June 2),** I was struck by the lack of the usual symptoms of generational trauma (addiction, violence, general anti-social behaviour, keeping children out of gangs and criminal involvement) among female descendants of Mennonites who came to

Canada in the 20s.

Perhaps sorting out the past can also involve recognizing the strength of faith, community and family as significant factors in avoiding these "usual" symptoms of trauma. These mothers and grandmothers exhibited loving kindness, care and compassion in spite of terrible events in their lives. The author did not seem to find that their trauma transmitted through the generations. It seemed to have stopped.

Perhaps living a life of faith and in a faith community, while not the perfect medicine, may be strong medicine to alleviate intergenerational trauma. Surely this is good news.

DAVID JOHNSON, KITCHENER, ONTARIO (FIRST MENNONITE CHURCH)

*Editor's Note: We asked Sherry Sawatzky-Dyck to respond.*

**I am mindful that my sample size of research subjects was very small. Initially I planned to only interview a small number of people, but I have decided to extend the project and increase the sample size to make some of my research more conclusive.**

Similarly, I am just beginning the analysis of my data, so any conclusions are preliminary. I am currently researching other studies and articles on similar or parallel topics to help me better understand what I have found.

However, according to my research so far, plus anecdotally through my work as a psychotherapist, I have indeed found this lack of the usual trauma symptoms to be true.

The letter writer attributes this to faith, but cause and effect are very different. I think faith is a factor, but I wonder if faith community with an emphasis on "community" might be an even larger factor. This is a complicated issue. In my ongoing research for the next year or so, I plan to investigate the protective factors such as faith, community, etc. while also looking at those factors that have interfered with trauma recovery and wellness for this group.

SHERRY SAWATZKY-DYCK, BRANDON, MANITOBA

---

### /// Online

#### ✉ Depths of serenity

**In response to "Rest and restlessness" (June 30): It's been great to discover meditation.** I feel certain it will take me further and further into the depths of serenity, as many say it will.

We rest the body, but do we really rest the mind? The world will never be fully at peace, near or far, but, in my belief, inwardly our peace can be continual and limitless.

I'm a novice at meditation, but already experience a deepening of joy, calmness and clarity. I think of it as better anchoring to the infinite, eternal Kingdom within. As a spiritual practice, there's perhaps nothing higher.

HOWARD BOLDT, OSLER, SASKATCHEWAN



## ✉ Our land

### In response to an article about the land acknowledgement quilt at Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship in Winnipeg (June 30):

The Mennonite land acknowledgement is simple: “we have your land and we are not giving it back.”

PETER REIMER, GRETNA, MANITOBA

## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Cook**—Cailin Amaya Rose (b. May 7, 2023) to Ryan Cook and Jessica Rivers, Nith Valley Mennonite Church, New Hamburg, Ont.

**Feilberg**—Wendell Dax Wyllie (b. June 18, 2023) to Kari and Riley Feilberg, Grace Mennonite Church, Steinbach, Man.

**Lichti**—Reid Lincoln (b. June 23, 2023) to Eric and Christine Lichti, Tavistock Mennonite Church, Tavistock, Ont.

**Noble**—Sophie Margaret (b. June 29, 2023) to Jessica and Kenton Noble, Home Street Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man.

### Baptisms

**Samuel Baechler, Jonas Gaulton, Aiden Neeb**—Wellesley Mennonite Church, Wellesley, Ont., June 11, 2023

**Lyn Gilbank, Mike Snyder**—The First Mennonite Church of Vineland, Vineland, Ont., May 28, 2023

**Ruth Penfold**—Tavistock Mennonite Church, Tavistock, Ont., June 18, 2023

### Weddings

**Schultz/Cavanaugh**—Mitchell Schultz (Poole Mennonite Church) and Sean Cavanaugh, June 10, 2023 at the Schultz’s family farm.

### Deaths

**Dick**—Herm W, 94 (b. May 17, 1928; d. March 28, 2023), North Leamington United Mennonite Church, Leamington, Ont.

**Dyck**—John, 71 (b. Nov. 4, 1951; d. June 20, 2023), Home Street Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man.

**Enns**—Madeleine Ruth, 80 (b. Sept. 28, 1942; d. July 14, 2023), Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg, Man.

**Gossen**—John Arthur, 85 (b. Aug. 31, 1937; d. June 25, 2023), Steinbach Mennonite Church, Steinbach, Man.

**Kropf**—Erma, 93 (b. Aug. 2, 1929; d. July 3, 2023), Tavistock Mennonite Church, Tavistock, Ont.

**Leis**—Ellen, 93 (b. Sept. 14, 1929; d. June 15, 2023), Tavistock Mennonite Church, Tavistock, Ont.

**Pankratz**—Valerie Ann Heppner, 60 (b. Sept. 26, 1962; d. June 24, 2023), Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg, Man.

**Peters**—Betty (nee Hiebert), 90 (b. July 5, 1933; d. July 12, 2023), Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg Man.

**Peters**—Dorothy, 67 (b. Oct. 17, 1955; d. March 5, 2023), Home Street Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man.

**Sawatzky**—Sarah (nee Sawatzky), 92 (b. March 24, 1931; d. June 23, 2023), Altona Mennonite Church, Altona, Man.

**Tessmann**—Nick, 95 (b. Jan 28, 1928; d. June 10, 2023), Springfield Heights Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man.

**Toews**—Werner (Vern), 86 (b. Jan. 24, 1937; d. June 1, 2023) Leamington United Mennonite church, Leamington Ont.

**Vlodarchyk**—Mary (nee Fischer), 90 (b. May 21, 1932; d. June 9, 2023) Leamington United Mennonite Church, Leamington Ont.

**Wiebe**—Krista (nee Danner), 61 (b. April 14, 1962; d. May 11, 2023), Shantz Mennonite Church, Baden, 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.*

# CANADIAN Mennonite is evolving.

## Help shape our next chapter.

# Take the survey

[www.surveymonkey.com/r/CM\\_mag\\_ideas](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CM_mag_ideas)





## FROM OUR LEADERS

## Executive road trip

Michael Pahl

It was a tour to remember: three days, seven venues, spanning Manitoba from east to west.

Recently, Mennonite Church Canada Executive Minister Doug Klassen and I travelled around the province to meet with 45 pastors and other congregational leaders from 24 of our Mennonite Church Manitoba congregations. We wanted to know: How are our congregations and leaders doing? What are their questions and concerns? What challenges do they face? What's happening in their congregations that brings them joy?

So, we stocked up on goodies to go with the coffee being provided by our hosts, and we hit the road. As we drove, we had our own conversations about the state of the church in Canada and around the world, the challenges and joys in our own work as executive ministers. And we wondered what we would hear from church leaders.

Each conversation had its own tone, reflecting the specific people gathered, the congregations they represented, and the regions in which they lived and ministered. Some were more optimistic about the future of the church, others less so. Some were more informed and enthusiastic about regional and nationwide church ministries, others not so much. Some were focused on the day-to-day tasks of church ministry, while others wanted to discuss cultural trends and theological issues.

There were, however, a few common threads in these conversations. For one, our church leaders have significant concerns about their congregations and the future of the church. There are concerns around the “unsettling and re-settling” that is happening in the Mennonite world (and wider) as conferences, congregations, and pastors realign around particular positions on theological or social issues. There are concerns around cultural shifts we



PHOTO BY HAYDN BLACKKEY FLICKR

are experiencing related to faith, the institutional church, understandings of community and commitment, and so on. There are ongoing concerns around aging and shrinking congregations.

These together point to deeper, larger concerns we heard often in our conversations: concerns around the unity and viability of the church, both as congregations and as a regional and nationwide church. What will the church look like in 10 years? Even in five years? Can we find our common centre in Jesus, around whom we can continue to gather and worship and serve together despite our differences? Are we able, and willing, to adapt to new ways of being and doing church, ways that are sustainable and life-giving for this generation?

Another common thread in our conversations, then, was the level of deep discernment happening in our congregations. Many of our churches are grappling with big questions. Congregational identity, vision, and mission. Inclusion around gender, sexual, or ethnic diversity. The use of our church buildings, even whether to sell or redevelop. How to reach out to our local community to meet the needs

of our neighbours.

Yet despite these concerns and questions, there was another common thread running through our conversations: expressions of joy, even excitement, at what God is doing among us. Doug and I saw faces light up as our church leaders spoke of new initiatives in local mission, ecumenical partnerships in worship and community service, young people being baptized, older folks continuing to grow in their faith, the congregation gathering together for worship in new ways, and more. We heard appreciation for regional church work in supporting pastors and congregations, providing transformative camp experiences, and encouraging meaningful climate action. We heard enthusiasm for national church work around cross-denominational engagement, International Witness, and resourcing through Common Word.

As Doug and I left these meetings, hitting the road for home, our thoughts swirled and our hearts swelled at what we had seen and heard. God is at work among us. Yes, we have some significant challenges, and they are not small ones. Yes, we have some substantial work to do as congregations, as regional churches, and as a nationwide church to respond to these challenges and adapt to changing realities. Yet God has not abandoned us; indeed, God is actively at work among us.

May we have eyes to see the movement of God's Spirit among us, around us, and beyond us, and may we have the courage to move with God's Spirit into the future God wants to shape for us as a Mennonite church in Canada. ✎

*Michael Pahl is executive minister of Mennonite Church Manitoba. He lives in Winnipeg and can be reached at [mpahl@mennochurch.mb.ca](mailto:mpahl@mennochurch.mb.ca).*



## IN THE IMAGE

# The three blessings of June 17

Ed Olfert

**A**s I swing my legs out of bed, with a hip-to-heel grumble from a sciatic nerve, I experience a moment of curiosity: What new thing will the day bring, what blessing will come?

Saturday, June 17th, was such a day. It began a little sooner than most. Shortly after 6 a.m., I pulled into my son-in-law's farmyard. Later that day he was flying to Vancouver, where his sibling is dealing with critical illness. A sprayer operator was on site to spray his crops, and I received a quick lesson in hauling water from the farm dugout to supply the sprayer.

It was also a time to share the stress, to offer hope in the reality of grave sickness. It was a moment that blessed the day.

Shortly after, my wife Holly and I headed south to Regina, three-and-a-half hours away, to attend a funeral. A cousin's 24-year-old daughter-in-law, whom we had never met, had died of cancer. It seemed good to show our support for extended family members we know and love. As we sat in the large, full church waiting for the service to begin, the curiosity gene nudged again. What might be learned here? What would be the blessing?

That blessing came at the moment when the deceased woman's parents rose and walked to the front. In the reading of scripture, in the telling of stories, in moments of laughter and in the pauses for tears, these parents gave thanks for the daughter they had claimed for 24 years.

They extended thanks to all who gathered, to their son-in-law and his family, to the church who had stood with their daughter through her years of struggle. They shared their appreciation to the medical professionals for the expertise and compassion they had brought to their daughter's life. The

friend groups, the prayer groups—all were eloquently held up and given thanks for their presence in the difficult journey of this family.

I imagined myself in the hard story that this family was enduring, and asked myself whether I would be able to stand before hundreds and publicly give thanks? Would I be prepared to share amusing stories; would I be able to allow tears their time and then move on to gratitude? Here were folks who embraced their spirituality, and turned that spirituality into strength, into thankfulness, into celebration. I was in awe.

June 17th was not yet done. On the way home, we stopped in Saskatoon for a farewell that was slightly less emotionally charged. Dave Feick, an old friend, was moving on from his role as director of Micah Mission, a restorative justice organization. For over a decade, Dave and Micah Mission have worked to create relationships between offenders—almost exclusively sex offenders—and support communities.

An initiative that Dave had begun was an annual day-long fishing trip to a Saskatchewan lake, which included both released offenders and volunteers. I've been privileged to be on a number of those excursions.

On this evening, as both released offenders and volunteers gathered to express thanks to Dave, June 17th offered one final blessing. As I observed the relationship and the caring extended



USED WITH PERMISSION

*Micah Project fishing trip, 2019.*

offender to offender, offender to volunteer, and both groups toward Dave, I was moved to tears.

Even though this is a familiar world to me, I can never quite understand the freedom that the guys have felt on those fishing days. They can lay down their fears of being accosted, recognized, vilified. Everyone knows something of their story, why they are involved in this group, and yet they are accepted. Yet they are loved. Yet they are equals.

I have not yet discovered another path that leads to peace, safety and integrity, more effectively.

June 17 was a pretty good day. ☺

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

## MIND AND SOUL

## Thinking about leisure

Randy Haluza-DeLay

It's summer and many of us have thoughts about vacations and so-called down time. What do these things mean for your spiritual practice?

Knowing that I was about to launch into a 12-day bike tour, someone suggested I write about leisure and Christian spirituality. Someone else suggested that 12 days on a bike saddle would certainly not be leisure. Yet another person rather strongly suggested that riding my bike for nearly two weeks was a waste of time. I even received some scriptural proof-texting about "to whom much has been given, much is expected." Clearly the implication was that this type of leisure, or maybe any leisure, was not in keeping with Christian discipleship.

No point arguing with that point of view. I won't bother mentioning that some of the hours spent in repetitive pedalling are even prayerful. I also play games as I ride, waving my arms like an airplane, counting the different bird species I hear along the way, saying

"howdy!" to every person going the opposite direction. To be honest, there's maybe too much time with my own thoughts.

Once upon a time, I used to teach in a university-level recreation and leisure studies program. Leisure is surprisingly complicated. Frankly, I think everybody needs to learn to play; somehow as we mature we lose the innate playfulness of our early years. In fact, one notion of human nature is that of *homo ludens*—the playing ones. That beats thinking we are the wise ones (*homo sapiens*), despite the lack of supporting evidence.

One concept of leisure is to frame it in contrast to work, specifically including both paid and unpaid work. That acknowledges the gendering of both work and leisure, since domestic labour is usually undervalued or not valued at all. Still, this way of thinking does not define leisure by what it is, but by what it is not.

Leisure can also be conceptualized as

activities, which is equally problematic. Early in my married life I learned that my wife did not consider going to the playground with our little children as leisure, like I did. For her, it was yet another extension of care-giving and domestic labour.

This example shows that "leisure" has meanings that differ among people. Is going to church or volunteering for community groups leisure?

Other conceptualizations of leisure relate to joy, pleasure or other emotions, or how the activities and feelings may become part of our self-understandings. We probably all know people who could learn a thing or two about playing.

In a Christian context, leisure is often framed in the context of the creation story and the Sabbath: "*On the seventh day God rested.*" This has been used to legitimize a day of rest (good), and legalistically regulate the activities of the day (not so good). In fact, leisure has often become labelled as sinful in that framework.

In a capitalist context, leisure and vacations have been justified as beneficial for the increased productivity of workers. Leisure/Sabbath/holidays/vacation are fundamental to recuperation/rest/recovery so that workers can perform better when they return. Zoinks!

Most definitely, I do not want to frame what we humans do in terms of productive or non-productive. These conceptualizations point to the need to reflect also on the nature of the human being. Could there be something about play, recreation and leisure that is fundamental to our human nature? Ponder that this summer, but do so leisurely, of course. ☸

*Randy Haluza-DeLay lives in Toronto and can be reached at [haluzadelay@gmail.com](mailto:haluzadelay@gmail.com).*



PHOTO BY RANDY HALUZA-DELAY



## TALES FROM THE UNENDING STORY

# Mightier than the mountains of prey

Joshua Penfold

I love the outdoors, but I'll admit I'm far from being able to call myself a legitimate outdoorsman. I romanticize the idea of living out in the bush, being off the grid, being self-sustaining, focusing on survival. But I know it's not as lovely as I make it out to be in my imagination, nor do I have the skills needed, or maybe the will, to do it.

I recently read Gary Paulson's *Hatchet* series of books. While by no means definitive resources on outdoor living, they follow a young boy's survival adventures in northern Ontario. I also watched a couple of seasons of *Alone*, the History Channel reality show in which contestants compete to see who can survive the longest by themselves in the wild with only the 10 items they choose to bring with them.

Regardless of how reliable or realistic these depictions are, they both remind me that the wild is just that, wild. I'm

reminded how inexperienced and uneducated I am in regard to actually living in the wild. It is magnificently and breathtakingly beautiful, terribly real and humbly dangerous. I am both ill-equipped and intrigued. I might have learned to identify and forage a few simple things in the bush, but I certainly couldn't survive off ramps, puff balls and trout lily.

In both *The Hatchet* and *Alone* the most fear-inducing aspect of living in the wild is the presence of predatory animals: wolf packs, cougars, mountain lions and bears. Human frailty becomes abundantly apparent when confronted with these magnificent beasts. When out in the wild, they are the top of the food chain and demand great respect and awe. Watching *Alone*, contestants live with a constant low-grade anxiety, aware of the danger of predators. Anxiety becomes terror for participants

and viewers during encounters with the beasts.

Psalm 76 is written to celebrate God's great power, declaring God's fearsomeness. There is one line, translated by Robert Alter, that helped me better appreciate God's awesomeness in light of my outdoorsy idealism. *Refulgent you were, mightier than the mountains of prey* says Psalm 76:4.

Alter's commentary on this verse says, "This phrase is strange, powerful, and haunting, and it does not call for emendation, as many scholars have claimed. 'The mountains of prey' are the wild mountains where lions and other predatory beasts roam. God is seen here as even more awesome than that scary realm."

When it comes to the wild, to these majestic and terrifying animals, I have a deep and distant respect, a fascination, a reverential appreciation of their power, and also a healthy fear of them, knowing that when confronted with them my life is in danger.

I'm not sure that I want to over-emphasize a parallel between my relationship with wild beasts and God, but I think there is something helpful there to hold on to.

We are quick to cling to the unconditional love, compassion, grace, forgiveness and kindness of God, but there is no shortage of scripture that promotes a healthy fear of God's holy awesomeness. I do struggle to know how to understand the "fear the Lord" characteristics of God, but perhaps this "mightier than the mountains of prey" can help me understand how to hold a healthy fear of a powerful, beautiful, dangerous, untamed and majestic God. ☞

*Joshua Penfold lives in New Hamburg, Ontario and can be reached at [penfoldjoshua@gmail.com](mailto:penfoldjoshua@gmail.com).*



PHOTO BY THE HISTORY CHANNEL

*The cast of Alone, Season 8, which was taped around Chilko Lake, B.C.*

## NEWS &amp; PEOPLE

# Million-dollar fraud hits Winnipeg church

Story and photo by Aaron Epp  
Senior Writer

Members of a Winnipeg church are feeling shocked and bewildered after the revelation that multiple households in the congregation were defrauded of a total of more than \$1 million.

Leaders at Bethel Mennonite Church informed the congregation last month of the case of affinity fraud—an investment scam based on assumed trust that targets members of an identifiable group, such as elderly people or religious or ethnic communities.

More than 30 households were defrauded over the course of at least 10 years. The church is not publicly naming the people involved.

The story begins more than a decade ago, when the fraudster approached his parents, who are active members at Bethel, for financial support.

He said he needed the money for delinquent child support payments as well as legal fees for a lawsuit he claimed would

result in a large settlement.

When the parents could no longer give money, they began asking friends at the church to help their son.

Those friends were told that they would get their money back as soon as the lawsuit was settled. They were also told that the lawsuit was protected by a non-disclosure agreement and were asked not to say anything to anyone, as it could jeopardize the lawsuit's outcome.

The scope of the fraud started coming to light last August when a few members of the church became concerned after learning about the loans.

From September 2022 to April 2023, a church committee worked with the family to investigate the son's claims. It became apparent that there likely had never been a lawsuit.

The fraudster's parents had kept careful records in the meantime. In addition to the \$700,000 they gave their son, who at one

time attended the church, 35 households at Bethel had contributed almost \$1.1 million.

Members at Bethel are experiencing a range of emotions, including relief that the fraud has been exposed and deep sadness, says Adelia Neufeld Wiens, a spokesperson for the church.

"There is no playbook out there that we can find for how a church should deal with this," said Neufeld Wiens, a Bethel deacon who is designated to speak publicly on this matter.

The church has alerted the financial crimes unit of the Winnipeg Police Service and is seeking expertise on how to support those who have been harmed.

"It's a complicated story and it's not anywhere near done," Neufeld Wiens said. "As a church we talk about healing and justice, but those are not things that you can legislate or demand; they take time."

This past February, the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre reported that in 2022, it received fraud and cybercrime reports totaling \$530 million in victim losses. That was a nearly 40 per cent increase from 2021, an increase the centre describes as unprecedented.

The centre, which is jointly managed by the RCMP, the Competition Bureau and the Ontario Provincial Police, estimates that only 5 to 10 per cent of people who are victims of fraud report it.

Leaders at Bethel chose to inform the whole congregation about the fraud and contact the media for several reasons, Neufeld Wiens said.

They want to ensure that they are being transparent and they want to assure those who have been harmed that the church cares about them.

Additionally, leaders at Bethel see the affinity fraud that took place in their midst as a cautionary tale.

"We as a church need to be open about it for the sake of other churches as well," Neufeld Wiens said.

"It's important to recognize the power of secrecy," she added. "Secrets can be toxic and dangerous.... If you're asked to give money and there's secrecy involved, be very careful. And I think that's also what's behind council's desire for openness and transparency. The secret's gone on for long enough."%



Adelia Neufeld Wiens is a deacon at Bethel Mennonite Church, where 35 households were defrauded of more than \$1 million.



# Bus tour visits Stó:lō sites in B.C.

Story and photo by Amy Rinner Waddell  
CHILLIWACK, B.C.

A nine-hour bus tour gave 30 participants a taste of the history of places that Indigenous people had inhabited for 10,000 years prior to the arrival of Mennonites in B.C. in the 1930s. The July 14 tour was guided by Sonny McHalsie, a cultural advisor and historian at the Stó:lō Nation's Research and Resource Management Centre located in Chilliwack, B.C.

McHalsie said he began collecting stories of the local elders 30 years ago and now offers immersive educational bus tours through Stó:lō territory.

The July 14 tour, which focused on significant Indigenous sites, history, beliefs and culture, was initiated by Mennonite Church B.C. and Mennonite Central Committee B.C.'s Partners in Reconciliation program. It included stops at Tomtomiyeqw Lookout, Thunderbird Mountain, Kawkawa (Q'owqewem) Lake, Coquihalla Fishing Rock, Telte-Yet Pithouse and the Lady Franklin Rock (Bad Rock) in Yale.

Participants were immersed in Indigenous history and lore as McHalsie pointed out names of over 100 mountains, rivers and land formations in the Stó:lō language. With new eyes, participants saw mountains that resembled human forms. They heard about Stó:lō youths receiving a spirit power at puberty but not being allowed to talk about it. They learned about canoe construction and different ways of fishing and drying salmon.

More sobering stories included those about the CN Railway destroying sacred land for railroad construction, and up to two-thirds of the Stó:lō dying of smallpox.

At the site of the Telte-Yet Pithouse in a



*Sonny McHalsie (in red) tells stories of Kawkawa Lake, or Q'owqewem Lake, to Mennonites on an Indigenous tour in B.C.*

campground in Hope, McHalsie explained the tradition of constructing pithouses for winter shelter. Recreational campers wandering by undoubtedly had no idea that the large depression in the ground had such a rich and ancient history.

Participants expressed appreciation for McHalsie's depth of knowledge, while McHalsie expressed thanks for those who took time to learn more about Indigenous culture. "We need to listen after what's been perpetrated over the years," said Robert Martens. Alissa Funk described the experience as "getting a different sense of place."

Cheryl Isaac chose to go on the tour as it has been her goal this year to learn more about the Indigenous people of the Fraser Valley. "The highlight for me was the explanation of why mountains were

named just by the way that the Indigenous people saw them, whether they looked like an animal, bird, or perhaps a woman or a man or a child," she said. "I could actually recognize what Sonny was telling us . . . [it] made perfect sense to me."

Gareth Brandt said, "I've always known in my head that there were people here before European settlers came, but it added a layer of depth to travel through our valley hearing the original Indigenous place names from an Indigenous guide and experiencing the sites where Indigenous people have lived, worked, played and worshiped for thousands of years." Brandt said that hearing over 100 place names was overwhelming, still, "naming is claiming," and "learning these names is part of learning the truth that can lead to reconciliation." ❧

# High school students visit Middle East

By James Friesen, Westgate Mennonite Collegiate

On the last night of Westgate's 2023 Middle East trip, students and staff met on the rooftop of the Ecce Homo Convent in the Old City of Jerusalem to reflect on their experiences. Fittingly, their gathering was interrupted by the call to prayer echoing across the city. No one seemed to mind. All of us soaked in the melodic sound, as the call invited people to pause and reflect on the place of God in their lives.

When the meeting resumed, everyone had something to share. Some of the 19 students on the June trip reflected on their time in Nazareth at the beginning of the trip, listening to Waseem, a Palestinian Israeli, tell his story of upheaval and struggle. Others commented on the kibbutz tour with Ellis, a Jewish Israeli man who spoke with pride about what his community had accomplished in northern Israel.

A number of students spoke about their time in the Wadi Rum, enjoying the rocks changing colour as the sun set, sipping on sweet Bedouin tea. Still others reminisced about Petra and its magnificent carvings shaped into the red rock. Many were overwhelmed by the blend between the majestic human made creations of the Nabateans and the awe-inspiring natural formations like the canyon by which we entered.

In thinking about our time in the West Bank, students reflected on their visit to Hebron, walking on streets that were off limits to our Palestinian guide. We spoke about the concrete separation barrier and the graffiti scrawled upon it, graffiti that

pleaded for a world in which walls are not needed.

It was in this spirit that trip participants remembered our meeting with Gilli, an Israeli Jewish man, and Laila, a Palestinian Muslim. Gilli shared about the loss of his brother, who went missing in the Yom Kippur War. His body was never recovered.

Laila spoke about her son Qussay who died as an infant in 2002 when Israeli soldiers prevented her from taking him to the hospital for more than five hours.

Both Gilli and Laila admitted that their anger and grief were almost unbearable, but somehow they found a way to use their stories to tell others that the cycle of violence must end. The pinnacle of the sharing came when Laila revealed that she had recently met a soldier who was one of those who caused the death of her son.

The students spoke with reverence about her response and the fact that she could move through her anger to a place of reconciliation.

Reflecting together on all these stories and experiences, we recognized how our time in the Middle East had changed us. We knew we would continue to reflect upon the unfathomable monuments proclaiming the history of the region, the intensity of the current political situation, the openness of religious identity, and the natural beauty of this unique part of the world. With these thoughts in mind, we remained on the roof for quite some time, quietly listening to the street sounds and taking in the nightscape of the city of peace. ✎

*James Friesen is principal of Westgate Mennonite Collegiate in Winnipeg.*



PHOTO BY JAMES FRIESEN

*Westgate students on the roof of the Ecce Homo Convent in Jerusalem.*



# Mennonite Centre building in Ukraine under Russian control

By Janet Dirks

Friends of the Mennonite Centre in Ukraine

At first glance, the office appears unremarkable, but for the photograph of Vladimir Putin on a bookcase and the Russian flag on the desk. The woman in the picture looks awkward; her hands seem to rest uneasily, holding neither paper nor pen.

The photograph was shared on a chatroom called “Collaborators of Molochansk.”

The room in the photograph was once the office of Oksana Druchynina, who for many years served as the manager of the Mennonite Centre in the town of Molochansk, formerly Halbstadt. Now the room is occupied by a clerk for the Russians, a woman who, Druchynina says, accepted food hampers from the Mennonite Centre.

“That is my desk, my phone and even my plant,” Druchynina said. “I guess it’s good to know the building is still standing.”

Druchynina and her children left Ukraine at the beginning of the war and now live in Abbotsford. She continues to work remotely for the Mennonite Centre, which administers humanitarian aid in Ukraine.

She says she hears little from the people back in Molochansk, as “most are being monitored by the authorities.” Photographs, such as the one of her former office, are shared by those who have left the town.

For two decades, the Centre provided food and medical aid, as well as programs for seniors and children, working out of the former girls’ school, built by Mennonites.

Even after Molochansk was occupied by the Russians at the beginning of the war, eight staff members at the Centre continued to work at what became the main supplier of food for the town.

“We were basically a large soup kitchen,” says Alvin Suderman, board chair of Friends of the Mennonite Centre (FOMCU), the Canada-based organiza-



SUPPLIED PHOTO

***Oksana Druchynina discovered this photo of the room that was her office before Russians took over the Mennonite Centre in Molochansk, Ukraine.***

tion that funds Mennonite Centre projects in Ukraine.

But in September of 2022, the building was seized by Russian authorities and the Centre reluctantly closed operations in Molochansk.

Suderman says they had little choice. “They insisted we set up a Russian bank account in Russian currency and register under the new Russian administration. They started flying the Russian flag.”

That’s when the decision was made

to focus on partnerships with several church-based organizations throughout Ukraine, including in the Shiroke community (Neuendorf) and in the city of Zaporizhzhia.

“We are helping at a much higher rate than we were in previous years,” says Mr. Suderman. “We are currently spending \$20,000 a week in Ukraine.” Last year FOMCU raised \$2.5 million, nearly five times what it normally receives from donors.

The money goes to supply food, shelter, clothing, blankets, gasoline, medicine and other essentials. There is never a shortage of needs.

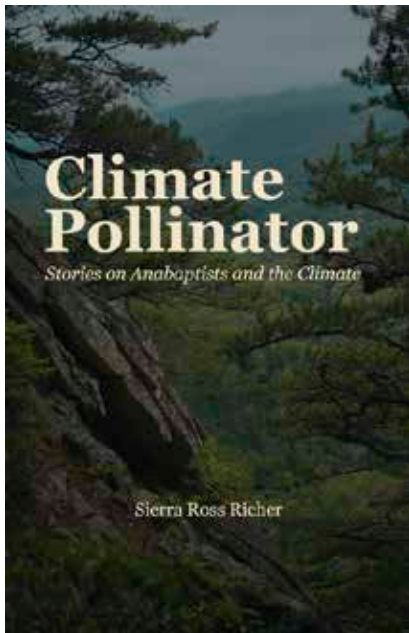
Last month’s destruction of the Nova Kakhovka dam, an event that submerged entire towns in Southern Ukraine and displaced thousands, has been called a monumental humanitarian, economic and ecological catastrophe by the chief of the UN. Funds from FOMCU have gone to help some of those who were forced to flee their homes.

Oksana Druchynina knows families from Kherson, displaced in the flooding. She says many people she speaks to are preparing for what they are convinced is the next catastrophe—the destruction of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. “Everyone is expecting it.”

For more, see [mennonitecentre.ca](http://mennonitecentre.ca). Friends of the Mennonite Centre is a volunteer-run organisation that sends 100 percent of donations to Ukraine. ❧

*Janet Dirks recently retired as Alberta Bureau Chief for CTV National News. Now living in Victoria, Dirks is a member of the board of Friends of the Mennonite Centre in Ukraine.*

## Lively new book shares short stories from 14 countries



The article to the right is one of 48 short stories in *Climate Pollinator*, a new book about Anabaptist climate responses. The lively little book—written by Sierra Ross Richer, illustrated by Leah Kauffman and put out by the Anabaptist Climate Collaborative—is short on rhetoric and long on personal, practical examples of real people living real lives. For more, see [anabaptistclimate.org](http://anabaptistclimate.org).

# Gardening in a drought

By Sierra Ross Richer

**L**ike most Maasai people in Kenya, Joel Lankas grew up raising cattle, not growing plants. But at his new home in Kimuka, Kajiado, he grows both vegetables and trees.

“The population (in Kenya) is growing every day,” Joel said. “Since there is no place to graze livestock and cities are (encroaching on) villages, people now are shifting to other alternatives, including myself.”

A severe three-year drought, the last in a series of dry spells experienced in Kenya over the last few decades, has made cattle raising much harder. The lack of rain means the grasses cows need to eat don’t grow. In addition, human development on pasturelands means there’s less room for herds to roam. Instead, Joel and others are picking up farming.

At his home, Joel has a garden with kale, spinach and onions. He waters his plants with water from a well. But many living in the communities around him don’t have that option.

“Water is a really big challenge,” Joel said. Many of the people he works with in his role as field officer for Maasai Integrated Development Initiatives (MIDI), rely on seasonal rivers for their water. Because of the drought, many now have to buy water from trucks that sell it.

“They don’t have an alternative to get water,” Joel said.

With water so scarce, how do people grow food? MIDI teaches some water-conserving techniques in its self-help groups.

One option is to plant a sack garden. This involves planting vegetables like kale in large feed sacks that can be placed in the shade near people’s houses. Because the water is contained in the bag, it isn’t lost as quickly.

Another technique, called a sunken bed, uses mulch and grass mixed into the soil to retain water. “When you water it, you



Sierra Ross Richer

put grass on top so that the evaporation will be minimal,” Joel explained.

In addition to giving lessons on growing vegetables, Joel encourages people to plant trees.

“Trees will improve the soil fertility,” he said, “they will also conserve the soil, they prevent soil erosion, (and) they are wind breakers.”

When Joel moved to Kimuka in 2018, he planted 30 trees in his compound, including a number of native tree species.

“They are very big now,” Joel said.

The grevillea trees he planted provide leaves he can feed to his livestock, and that’s only one of the benefits he’s reaping: “My home is cool, and we come from a really hot place,” Joel said. “(And) my home is beautiful, there is no dust when it is windy like now.” ☸



# Ex-prisoners plant church

By Pastor Niguse Bekele

Prison Ministry Director, Meserete Kristos Church

*The following is an excerpt from the June 2023 issue of MKC News, the newsletter of Meserete Kristos Church (MKC), the Anabaptist denominational body in Ethiopia. Reprinted with permission.*

**E**THIOPIA—Ejere Prison in the West Shewa Zone of Oromia Regional State is one of the prisons where the MKC Prison Ministry has been serving. In addition to providing holistic services to the inmates, the prison ministry shares the gospel of love to inmates. In Ejere Prison, two of the inmates who accepted Christ were released from the prison after finishing their sentences.

These two ex-prisoners, Gadisa and Birru, planted a new MKC church in their community. The MKC Prison Ministry visited them this month. The number of their church members has reached more than 100. The Prison Ministry team was honoured to attend the baptism of 18 new believers.

God transformed the lives of criminals through his love and used them to share the good news of Jesus Christ with other people. The team praised God, witnessing to his power to transform the hearts of people. ☩



SUPPLIED PHOTO

*Recent baptisms at a Meserete Kristos Church congregation planted by two ex-prisoners.*

To receive MKC News contact:  
[mkcho.pr@gmail.com](mailto:mkcho.pr@gmail.com)

In business for good

*Celebrating 70 years of  
entrepreneurs investing  
in entrepreneurs.*

[meda.org/business](http://meda.org/business)

**MEDA**

# Student's experience at Grebel leads to baptism

By Farah Jurdi  
Conrad Grebel University College

When Timothy Khoo was choosing a university, he looked for something that stood out. "I kept hearing about this Mennonite residence from my family and church community, and it piqued my interest," he said. Khoo is now a second-year Honours Physics student at the University of Waterloo and a returning upper-year student at Conrad Grebel University College.

Tim grew up in the Mennonite community and attended Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church. Living at Grebel just fit into place. "Honestly, Grebel was one of the reasons I chose UWaterloo" he says. "I thought that coming here would be a great chance to develop my faith. What I didn't know was what else I would find."



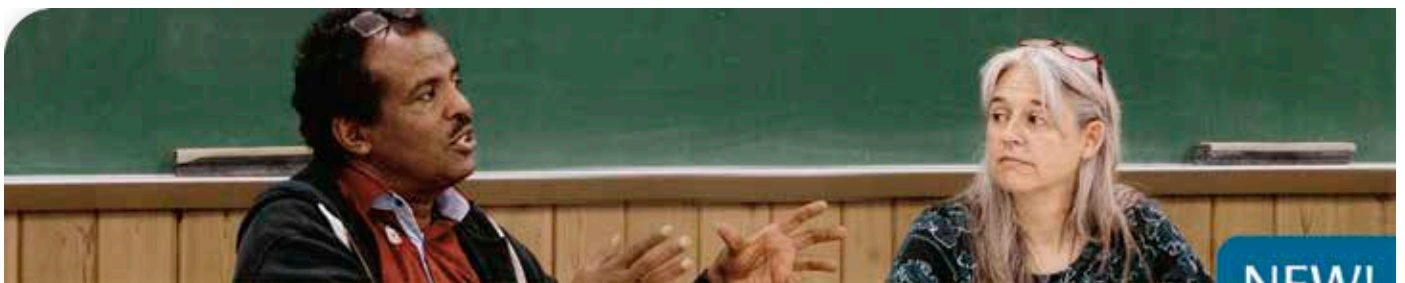
PHOTO BY MARGARET GISSING

Conrad Grebel University College student  
Tim Khoo.

Khoo has connected with Grebel for four terms and has been actively involved in student leadership throughout that time. He has participated in the chapel committee for several terms and has also been a don in residence.

"Grebel's community feels like a family because you really get to know everyone through events like community supper and chapel," said Khoo. "Having such a strong community is so impactful during your university experience; it overshadows the stresses of school. These are the fond memories I will remember when I'm older."

Just as Khoo's social circle has grown, so has his spirituality. "Grebel is an interesting place to grow spirituality," he said.



NEW!

## Expand your leadership skills

Check out our new **Practical Leadership Training** modules!

Gain tools in the areas of administration, leadership, contextual engagement and your own well-being.

- **Liderazgo que edifica** | Four-session online workshop (Spanish): Sept. 5, 12, 19, 26
- **Leadership Practices for Spiritual Vitality** | Four-session online workshop: Sept. 7, 14, 21, 28
- **Guide Your Congregation through Polarization** | Webinar: Sept. 20
- **Practicing Resilience in Response to Trauma** | In-person seminar: Sept. 29
- **Leading Congregations in Transition** | Online synchronous short course: Oct. 3, 10, 17, 24; Nov. 7
- **Intercultural Inclusion: From Symbolic to Shared Power** | Four-session online workshop: Oct. 4, 11, 18, 25
- **Practices and Principles for Effective Boards** | Four-session online workshop: Nov. 1, 8, 15, 22
- And more!

Learn more and register: [ambs.ca/plt](https://ambs.ca/plt)

 Anabaptist Mennonite  
Biblical Seminary



At Grebel, there is diversity of religious backgrounds as well as people with little to no faith background. Khoo connected to Grebel's Mennonite heritage and identity. "Even though it is principally Christian, there are so many different denominations and a lot of diverse perspectives to hear from. We get to have open and free discussions that are insightful and make you solidify your own perspective," he added.

Chapel serves as a "mid-week reset" for Khoo. "It prompts me to reflect on my week and discover how my faith intertwines with my life and asking myself 'How am I living my faith out?'" he shared. He found that his spiritual journey at Grebel became more rewarding by being an engaged member of the chapel committee.

"With Chapel, you get out what you put in. Being in chapel committee had me getting involved in ways I never thought that I could, such as informal preaching. That helped me build my faith as well," he said.

Through exploring his faith during chapel, worship and having open discussions with other Grebelites and Grebel's chaplain, Khoo knew what path he was ready to choose. "Coming to Grebel helped me push forward my faith so much," he said. "My experiences here inspired me to



PHOTO BY JEN KONKLE

*Jordan Li (left), Asa Suderman-Gladwell, chaplain Jessica Reesor Rempel, Savannah Edwards and Tim Khoo at a Grebel chapel service.*

be baptized. I realized that I had enough answered questions and I was ready to commit to continue walking down this road and learning about my faith."

While there is so much at Grebel that Khoo has come to appreciate over his four terms, his experience would not have been the same if he had not lived out Grebel's goal to inspire mind and spirit. "Faith-based events facilitate community

bonding and promote intentional opportunities for friendship," said Khoo. "Faith is a huge puzzle piece that makes my Grebel experience even more wonderful." ❧

*Farah Jurdi is a co-op student at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ontario.*

## What is a picture worth?

Maria H. Klassen

Special to Canadian Mennonite  
ST. CATHARINES, ONTARIO

In May, a painting sold for \$18,900 at the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Christian Benefit Thrift Shop in St. Catharines, Ontario.

Bidding started on the progressive silent auction item in mid-December, and closed on May 28, after no new bids had been placed for six business days. The donor of the painting has not been identified, and the store does not appraise or authenticate art items.

The new owner of this picture wishes to remain anonymous. He regularly visits thrift stores in the Niagara region to shop for his growing children. He says

the Christian Benefit Thrift Shop in St. Catharines is one of the best organized thrift stores in the area.

On the visit that led to his big purchase, he was looking to buy an older picture frame when he noticed an oil painting in the auction area. He felt the

PHOTO BY TIM ALBRECHT

***This photo sold for over \$18,000 in a thrift store silent auction.***



painting was of very good quality, and the colours used—especially the blues of the water and sky—were mesmerizing.

The signature on the painting was “W. Homer.” Winslow Homer was an American landscape painter (1836 - 1910) best known for his marine subjects. He is recognized as one of the foremost painters in nineteenth century America.

“Although the signature ‘W. Homer’ appears in the bottom right-hand corner, it appears to have been added later,” says the person who bought it. “The work is almost identical to a watercolour by the American artist Stephen Scott Young.”

Young is a twenty-first century

watercolourist, inspired by Homer, who paints people and scenery of the Bahamas and other southern locations. Young is referred to by some as “the Winslow Homer of his day.”

In the end, some mystery remains about the true creator of the thrift store painting.

The person who bought the painting is not an art collector, and says he would never have spent this much money if the painting was from a private collection. “I knew that my money would be put to good use by MCC,” he says, “so I entered the ‘bidding war.’”

He had done some research on MCC but had a few questions. In a discussion

with Tim Albrecht, manager of the store, Albrecht showed him a picture he had taken personally on an MCC learning tour to Ethiopia three years ago. In the photo, a young boy is drinking water from his hand, under a pump overflowing with clean water. This MCC-funded well project had provided clean water to a community that had previously suffered significant health issues due to their lack of clean water.

The purchaser of the painting says he is happy to help fund initiatives “that improve access to basics such as clean water and sanitation. The more we can do to reduce disparity in this world the better.” ☸

# The church that builds together, stays together

*Saskatoon church sends 13 volunteers to Cape Breton*

By Emily Summach  
Saskatchewan Correspondent

With suitcases full of work clothes and spirits full of enthusiasm, 13 people from Mount Royal Mennonite Church in Saskatoon traveled to Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia. The group served together on the Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS)

project to rebuild homes damaged by Hurricane Fiona in 2022. They were there from May 21 to 27.

The leader of the trip was Heather Wiebe, who has been a part of Mount Royal for 46 years. She says that MDS work has been

a personal passion for a long time. Wiebe proposed the trip to the congregation in January, and several people indicated an interest in going. She then researched the costs, available project options and other logistics. “People just kept dribbling in, until we had 13 people committed. It was very exciting,” said Wiebe.

Wiebe explained that a typical day at the Cape Breton site began with a 6 a.m. wake-up call. Volunteers had breakfast, took part in devotions and packed their bag lunches. They would arrive, tools in hand, at their project houses by 8 a.m. and work until 5 p.m. Evenings were spent eating together, hearing more about the work of MDS and socializing.

The work at the Cape Breton homes ranged from hanging drywall to roofing to completely gutting damaged homes.

Wiebe explained that MDS follows strict criteria when deciding which homes will be included in a project. MDS helps the most vulnerable. All homeowners who are helped are on low or fixed incomes. This includes seniors, people who are disabled, single parents and people who lack insurance or other resources to fix their damaged homes.

The organization also places a strong emphasis on listening to the stories of those whose homes are being worked on. Volunteers are told to put down their tools and talk to homeowners when they want to talk. Part of processing the impact of a disaster is talking about it. The mission of MDS is to “rebuild homes and restore



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HEATHER WIEBE

**Volunteers, crew and staff of the MDS Cape Breton project.**



hope;” listening is part of this.

“It’s really wonderful to be able to help,” said Wiebe. “On MDS, I feel like I get back more than I give. We had the chance to pray with one of the homeowners, and afterward they said, “Thank you—nobody has ever prayed for me before.”

One of the MDS first-timers on the trip from Mount Royal was pastor Garth Ewert Fisher. “MDS made it clear that no experience was necessary in order to volunteer, so I took that offer seriously,” he joked.

Since the church has a significant number of tradespeople and a strong culture of service, sending a large group to an MDS project fit well with the church’s values. Even those who were not able to join the trip gave generously to support the team.

Ewert Fisher said the trip provided an overall benefit to the entire congregation. “When people come back [from an MDS project] it makes a big impact on the congregation. People are inspired. Our congregation doesn’t write theological tomes; our service is with a hammer and screw gun.”

What he found most striking was the devotion people have for the mission of MDS. He met a woman at the site who had volunteered for MDS some years ago and felt like she wanted to gain more skills to help. She spent two years at a trades college learning construction and contracting and now serves as a crew leader. “I was blown away by her commitment to doing this good work,” he said.

John Longhurst, communications manager for MDS, said it’s not uncommon for groups of people from the same congregation to volunteer together. Typically, there is a person who is enthusiastic about MDS and gathers others to join. It’s an excellent bonding experience for churches. Teams can also have an intergenerational element.

Longhurst noted that there is always a need for more help, and there is still room for volunteers at the Cape Breton site from August 27 to September 2.

“Service with MDS is possibly one of the best forms of Christian witness,” Longhurst said. “It offers practical help to those lacking the resources to help themselves” ❧



Volunteers work on repairing the roof of a hurricane-damaged home on Cape Breton Island.

NIH RESEARCH STUDY

**bipolar genetics**

- Study participation includes an interview (2-4 hours) and a blood sample.
- Participants must be 18 or older and may be eligible if they have either a bipolar diagnosis or a family member with bipolar disorder.
- No travel necessary. No cost to participate. Financial compensation provided.

**Join A Study!**

Call 1-866-644-4363 or TTY: 1-866-411-1010  
Email [bipolargenes@mail.nih.gov](mailto:bipolargenes@mail.nih.gov), [www.nimh.nih.gov/JoinAStudy](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/JoinAStudy)

Write to National Institute of Mental Health  
10 Center Drive, MSC 1264, Bethesda, Maryland 20892-1264



Department of Health & Human Services  
National Institutes of Health



National Institute  
of Mental Health

[www.clinicaltrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov) Protocol No. 80-M-0083

# CMU launches master's program in spiritual care

CMU Release

Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) has added a new master of arts degree to its Graduate School of Theology and Ministry (GSTM) programming. As of fall 2023, students will be able to earn a Master of Arts in Spiritual Care, in addition to the three pre-existing master's options: Master of Divinity, Master of Arts in Theological Studies and Master of Arts in Christian Ministry.

The Master of Arts in Spiritual Care will equip students to do chaplaincy work and spiritual care in a vast array of settings, such as hospitals, schools, personal care homes, and prisons. CMU is collaborating with St. Boniface Hospital and the Selkirk Mental Health Centre to offer Supervised Psychospiritual Education (SPE) courses as part of the degree program.

To carry this out, CMU has welcomed Chenene Layne and Tim Frymire to the faculty as Adjunct Professors of Biblical and Theological Studies, SPE. Layne is the coordinator of spiritual care education at St. Boniface Hospital, where she teaches Clinical Psychospiritual Education (CPE) and Frymire teaches CPE through the

Selkirk Mental Health Centre.

Students will complete the SPE portion of their degrees with these instructors through their institutions. This includes teaching sessions, case studies, interpersonal group work and clinical practicum days on a unit. Faculty at CMU will teach the rest of the master's program content through a mix of in-person, hybrid and online courses. The curriculum covers topics such as sacred texts, historical studies of faith community and tradition, professional ethics, counselling and Indigenous studies, among others.

CMU is following the requirements set out by the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care and is moving towards accreditation with the national body. CMU will thus become an institution of record for students wanting to take SPE training, a significant role given that the University of Winnipeg was previously the only institution in Manitoba to offer these credits.

The development of a Master of Arts in Spiritual Care came about when Karl Koop, director of the graduate studies



Chenene Layne (left) and Tim Frymire

program, started having conversations last year with SPE instructors and staff at the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and heard about the significant need for spiritual care providers in Manitoba. With only one other spiritual care master's program in the province—at Providence University College—some institutions are hiring spiritual care providers even if they lack full qualifications, to meet the demand.

"Every year there's always way more people interested in CPE than the spots we can fill," says Layne, who is a certified spiritual care supervisor-educator. "A lot of people, as they are continuing to hear and learn about spiritual care, are really interested in seeing how to do ministry in a practical way or outside of a church structure."

This degree is also relevant for people working in congregations, though, as it teaches many pastoral care skills, Koop says. They're striving to take the program further, too, teaching the traditions of many denominations and faiths. "We're increasingly thinking about the interfaith dimensions of this," Koop says, adding that he hopes people from other faith traditions can find this program "accessible and hospitable." He also emphasizes the interdisciplinary nature of the program, which will connect easily with other programs at CMU like social work, psychology, and music therapy.

"Being able to be a listening and compassionate and empathetic presence for [people] is helpful," Layne says. She is grateful when more people and institutions take leadership in teaching spiritual care and contribute to this meaningful field. ☸



SUPPLIED PHOTO

For more, see [cmu.ca/gstm](http://cmu.ca/gstm).





# Songwriters' retreat creates new music for churches

By Will Braun

**N**ichelle Bauman felt pressure going into a weekend retreat of Mennonite songwriters. What would she come up with? What could she contribute? She also had a strong desire to learn.

Organizers had suggested in advance that the 23 participants from Canada, the U.S. and Mexico ponder the Beatitudes in preparation for the retreat. One night as Bauman was trying to fall asleep, three bars of music, rooted in the Beatitudes, came to her. She took these with her to the May retreat at Hidden Acres Camp near New Hamburg, Ontario.

The event was organized by the Anabaptist Worship Network, which secured a \$19,700 grant from the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship to cover costs. According to organizers, the intent of the retreat was to “elevate the creative voices of Anabaptist songwriters” and provide new material for churches, especially those for whom hymns are not the preferred style of music.

Bauman, who lives on an acreage north of Durham, Ontario, with her husband and two young kids, recorded her first album when she was 17. She is active in leading worship at Floradale Mennonite Church.



PHOTO BY ANNELI LOEPP THIESSEN

*Nichelle Bauman (left) and George Makinto work on a new song.*

Speaking by phone from her home, Bauman says that while 95 percent of the songs she has written “have some sort of spiritual theme,” other songwriting events she’d been part of were not a great fit because of their “secular vibe.” This time, she felt like she was with “[her] people.”

At one of the retreat sessions, Bauman shared her three lines of music with George Makinto and Erik Mohr. Bauman says that sharing your music is a “really vulnerable thing.” Many of the other participants were more prolific and experienced songwriters than her. She “held loosely” as she shared her music, curious what would come of it and how the process would unfold.

Within a few hours, Bauman and her collaborators had created most of a new song, “Hope is Ringing Out.” They finished the bridge the next day. “Sometimes ya gotta sleep on it,” Bauman says.

On another day, two songwriters—Emily Ralph Servant and Nathan Grieser—shared with Bauman a song that was 70 percent finished. They wanted another collaborator, a fresh set of eyes, to help them finish it.

Bauman says she was fascinated to see what the creative process looks like for other songwriters. Other highlights for her were the diversity within the group and singing together. While people held differing views, Bauman said it was beautiful the way they could sing together and affirm one another. This was a “beautiful representation of what the church can and should be.”

*For songs from the retreat, including a video recording of “Hope is Ringing Out,” see [togetherinworship.net](http://togetherinworship.net).*



PHOTO BY ANNELI LOEPP THIESSEN

*Nichelle Bauman (right) along with Emily Ralph Servant (left) and Nathan Grieser, at an Anabaptist songwriters' retreat.*



## BOOK REVIEW

# Is the theory of inerrancy inerrant?

*Godbreathed: What it Really Means for the Bible to be Divinely Inspired.* Zack Hunt. Herald Press, 2023, 192 pages.

Reviewed by Barb Draper

Zack Hunt was shocked when his Old Testament professor slammed a Bible against the chalkboard and shouted, “Stop worshipping this book!”

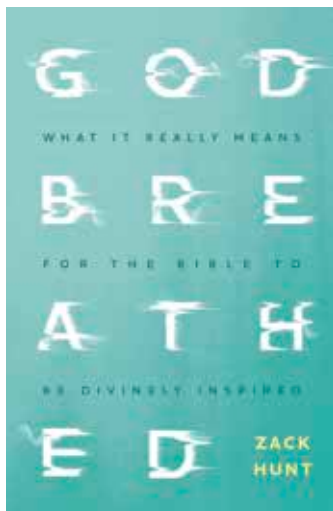
In Hunt’s American fundamentalist upbringing, the Bible was considered inerrant—free of all errors, and not to be slammed against chalkboards. His new book, *Godbreathed: What it Really Means for*

*the Bible to be Divinely Inspired*, describes how he moved beyond the biblical idolatry his professor warned of, to a different understanding of divine inspiration.

Hunt’s first book, *Unraptured: How Ends Times Theology Gets it Wrong*, was published by Herald Press in 2019.

Inerrancy is a modern concept, he says. The Bible is a collection of books, and it took centuries for the church to decide which books should be included. There was no magic process in making these decisions. “What we see are real people with real diversity of thought, opinion, and practice trying to figure it out on the fly,” he writes.

It was not until the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century that “the Bible went from the collection of sacred stories and lessons told in church, to a cherished representation of the divine,” says Hunt. By the nineteenth century, scholars in the Enlightenment tradition were questioning the historic and scientific accuracy of Bible stories and in response, controversy arose in the Christian church. Hunt says that before 1910 there were no discussions about



biblical inerrancy, but not long after, fundamentalists declared it inerrant.

“Rather than following the way of Jesus, inerrancy chooses the path of Icarus,” says Hunt, commenting that self-righteous confidence in one’s ability to interpret the Bible is the opposite of Christlike humility. The Bible becomes an idol if Christians defend their

theology with the assumption that their opinions are the actual words of God. The Bible becomes a weapon when there is no room for interpretation or disagreement.

The fear of hell is an important driver for the idea of a perfect Bible, says Hunt. Fundamentalist Protestantism rests on the idea that faith alone is what saves you from the fires of hell, so it is natural to want to be confident that you are confessing the right faith and that your faith is based on a reliable source. But a life built on rigid theology and the idea of a perfect Bible tends to disregard Christ’s message of love. When right belief is the focus, it encourages the love of ideas more than people.

“Scripture doesn’t exist as a manual for getting yourself to heaven or a weapon to wield against your enemies or a list of facts to memorize. It’s a field guide for loving your neighbor,” writes Hunt, stressing that if our interpretation of the Bible doesn’t lead us to love God and love our neighbours, we have missed the point.

Hunt found it freeing to move beyond literalism. He points to the fact that

some early church fathers argued for an allegorical rather than literal interpretation of scripture and that there are several cases in which the biblical text does not line up with archeological and historical evidence. Viewing the Bible as stories of faith that testify to what God has been doing allows for better intellectual integrity. Truth is set free when scripture is regarded as a collection of sacred stories rather than as a science textbook.

In their argument for biblical inerrancy, Christian fundamentalists point to II Timothy 3:16, which says all scripture is “God-breathed.” Hunt says this an incorrect interpretation of God’s inspiration. Inspiration refers not to a “one-time literary magic trick,” but an ongoing process of God interacting with his people. He writes, “Godbreathed Scripture isn’t a proof text for perfection but an acknowledgment that Scripture is inherently imperfect because it is written by godbreathed people.” Hunt’s use of God-breathed without a hyphen is deliberate; he wants readers to view the word from a fresh perspective.

On the issue of authority, Hunt says, “the Bible has no authority outside of the community of faith that gives it authority.” Because it is “a collection of written works compiled by the people of God” it receives its authority from the people of God. The Bible is not autonomous; it is an authority alongside the church.

Hunt’s book is interesting, easy to read and geared for lay people. Anyone with questions about the Bible or struggling with the idea of inerrancy should find it helpful. On the other hand, readers who have had no exposure to fundamentalism may find it a bit puzzling. Those wanting to move beyond fundamentalism may well find it freeing. ❧



## News shorts

### MBs create partnerships for dying churches

At the 2023 summit of the International Community of Mennonite Brethren Churches (ICOMB), held in Abbotsford, B.C. in June, participants focused on how to “pass the baton to the next generation.” As some rural churches die, ICOMB has begun partnering them with healthy churches, local and international, to discern together the spiritual and cultural issues to be addressed in order to thrive again. Early partnerships are seeing significant results in remote communities.

**SOURCE: MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE**

### Churches prevent election violence in South Africa

In South Africa, churches are providing explicitly neutral spaces where government representatives and community leaders dialogue together. Oscar Siwali, founder of the Southern African Development and Reconstruction Agency, shared at Menno-

nite Church USA's conference how his organization partners with churches to uphold democracy in their communities and diffuse violent situations anticipated to come with elections. With the 2021 Capitol riots in the U.S. in mind, Siwali challenged MC USA to consider how their own churches could similarly uphold the democratic process.

**SOURCE: MENNONITE MISSIONS NETWORK**

### Volunteers needed for Mennonite Disaster Service

Mennonite Disaster Service is in need of volunteers over the summer and into September in Nova Scotia, Minnesota and Illinois. Positions are available for skilled trades and for general labour. Crew leader positions are also needed in various locations across the US. For more, see [mds.org](http://mds.org).

### Women in leadership study at Mennonite Church USA

A new denomination-wide study of the experiences of women in ministry across Mennonite Church USA was presented at the recent MC USA conference. Presenters Elizabeth Johnson and Amy Zimelman

conducted interviews covering 15 topics with a cross-section of pastors in MC USA, including discussions about leaders' experiences of empowerment, support and harassment. The researchers found women pastors are three times more likely to experience harassment of any kind than men pastors. For more, see [mennoniteusa.org/news/clergywomen/](http://mennoniteusa.org/news/clergywomen/).

### Global hunger

While global hunger rose significantly during the pandemic, this upward trend has stalled, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. The post-pandemic economic recovery has helped, though rising food prices, violent conflict and severe weather events have undermined gains.

In 2022, approximately 783 million experienced hunger, far above pre-pandemic levels. By 2030, it is projected almost 600 million people will still be facing hunger. That is 119 million more than in a scenario in which neither the COVID-19 pandemic nor the Ukraine war occurred.

**SOURCE: CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK**

## Online Short Courses

Six weeks • no grades or papers!

### Learn about Anabaptism in your own context

What does it mean to read the Bible like an Anabaptist? Why does Anabaptist history matter today? AMBS's noncredit short courses wrestle with these questions and many more.

- **Exploring Peace and Justice in the Bible** with Drew Strait, PhD, and Jackie Wyse-Rhodes, PhD | Sept. 13 – Oct. 24, 2023
- **Exploring Anabaptist History and Theology** with Jamie Pitts, PhD | Oct. 25 – Dec. 12, 2023
- **Understanding Anabaptist Approaches to Scripture: What's Different and Why?** with Laura Brennenman-Fullwood, PhD, and David Cramer, PhD | Jan. 31 – March 12, 2024
- **Transforming Congregational Conflict and Communication** with Betty Pries, PhD | April 10 – May 21, 2024

**NEW Short Course! Biblical Interpretation Across the Two Testaments** with Mary Schertz, PhD, and Jackie Wyse-Rhodes, PhD | April 10 – May 21, 2024



### Anabaptist Short Course BUNDLE!

Sign up for all four short courses to get the bundle discount: only \$995 USD total. (Regular cost: \$350 USD per course)



**Anabaptist Mennonite  
Biblical Seminary**

[ambs.ca/short-courses](http://ambs.ca/short-courses)

## /// Calendar

### British Columbia

**Oct. 20-22:** MC B.C. women's retreat at Camp Squeah, "Planted-Rooted-Growing" with Bonnie Esau. To register, go to [www.mcbc.ca](http://www.mcbc.ca)

### Saskatchewan

**August 12:** The Spruce River Folk Festival returns to the Spruce River Farm at Spruce Home. The event is held to support indigenous land rights. For further information check [www.spruceriverfolkfest.com](http://www.spruceriverfolkfest.com).

**Sept. 17:** Shekinah Retreat Centre move-a-thon.

### Manitoba

**Sept. 17:** Join us for a We Are All Treaty People Celebration from 1-4 pm at the Forks Centre Field in Winnipeg! For more information, contact MCC's Indigenous Neighbours program coordinator at 204-925-1911 or [IndigenousNeighbours@mccmb.ca](mailto:IndigenousNeighbours@mccmb.ca).

### Ontario

**Sept. 1-3:** Labour Day Weekend retreat at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp. For more information, go to [www.slmc.ca/retreats](http://www.slmc.ca/retreats).

**Sept. 15-17:** Men's Retreat at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp. For more information, go to [www.slmc.ca/retreats](http://www.slmc.ca/retreats).

**Sept. 16:** Greater Toronto Area Mennonite Festival for World Relief from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Willowgrove Farm, day camp and nature school in Stouffville. For more information, visit [mcccanada.ca/get-involved/events](http://mcccanada.ca/get-involved/events).

**Sept 18-21:** Bruce Trail Hike, hosted by Silver Lake Mennonite Camp. For more information, go to [www.slmc.ca/retreats](http://www.slmc.ca/retreats).

**Sept. 25:** MCC Ontario Annual General Meeting at 7 p.m. For more information or to register, call 519-745-8458 ext. 238 or go to their website at [mcccanada.ca/get-involved/events/2023-mcc-ontario-annual-general-meeting](http://mcccanada.ca/get-involved/events/2023-mcc-ontario-annual-general-meeting).

**Sept. 25:** Join a Mass choir to prepare to sing Handel's Messiah at Centre in the Square on Sunday

afternoon, December 10 with the Kitchener Waterloo Symphony. Mennonite Mass Choir Messiah Rehearsals begin at 7:30 p.m. at First Mennonite Church in Kitchener. Register at [www.mennosingers.com](http://www.mennosingers.com)

**Sept 29 - Oct. 1:** Fall Hike Retreat at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp. For more information, go to [www.slmc.ca/retreats](http://www.slmc.ca/retreats).

**Sept. 29 - Oct. 1:** Seeking Transformation: An Un/Learning Retreat for Christian Settlers with facilitators Derek Suderman and Tanya Dyck Steinmann. For more information visit [fiveoaks.venue360.me/public/events/homepage](http://fiveoaks.venue360.me/public/events/homepage).

**Sept. 30:** Urban Anabaptist Church Planters Workshop, "Tentmakers: Opportunities and Challenges for Developing Congregations" at the Ottawa Mennonite Church from 10-4 p.m. Doors open at 9 a.m. for coffee, snacks and fellowship. For more information and to register by September 15, go to [mcec.ca/events](http://mcec.ca/events).

### Online

**August 15:** Resettlement info session: Welcoming the Stranger, from 7 to 8 p.m. You're invited to learn more about the BVOR program and the profound impact you could have in welcoming the stranger in the upcoming information session. For details and to register, visit [mcco.ca/events](http://mcco.ca/events).

**Sept 14:** Resettlement info session: Welcoming the Stranger, from 7 to 8 p.m. You're invited to learn more about the BVOR program and the profound impact you could have in welcoming the stranger in the upcoming information session. For details and to register, visit [mcco.ca/events](http://mcco.ca/events).

**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

#### ABNER MARTIN MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP

This annual scholarship is awarded by Menno Singers to a student who is affiliated with a Mennonite Church Eastern Canada congregation and is, or will be, in a full-time program of music study, graduate or undergraduate, during 2023-2024.

Applications must be mailed by **September 15, 2023**. For application documents or further information, contact Lewis Brubacher at

[lbrubacher@sympatico.ca](mailto:lbrubacher@sympatico.ca)



**Mennonite  
Central  
Committee**

Employment  
Opportunity  
Senior Editor

MCC Canada is hiring a **Senior Editor** for *Die Mennonitische Post*. We are seeking an experienced leader and manager to oversee the production and distribution of two German-language publications that promote learning and literacy, and build community among Low German-speaking colony Mennonites throughout Canada, US, Mexico, Belize and South America.

**For more information, and to apply please visit: [mcccanada.ca/get-involved/serve/openings/senior-editor-mennonitische-post](http://mcccanada.ca/get-involved/serve/openings/senior-editor-mennonitische-post).**

#### Employment Opportunity Executive Director

Shekinah Retreat Centre ([www.shekinah.ca](http://www.shekinah.ca)) has an opening for the Executive Director position. We are seeking a high energy person to grow our camping and facility rental programs.

The preferred candidate will have a commitment to the Anabaptist tradition, an entrepreneurial spirit, non profit leadership experience and excellent communication skills.

Preferred start date is **August 15**, but can be negotiated.

Position will remain posted until filled. Most salary and benefits follow MC Canada guidelines.

**For further information contact Board chair, Phyllis Goertz: 306 242 8367 or [p.goertz@sasktel.net](mailto:p.goertz@sasktel.net).**



# Foodgrains fundraiser in Leamington

By Barry Bergen

**T**he 10-acre corn field owned by Tiessen Acres near Leamington, Ontario, has a purpose. The proceeds of the field will be donated to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB), as part of the Sun Parlor Growing Project.

On Sunday, June 25, the project organizers hosted a fundraiser for CFGB in the Tiessen Acres machine shed. Over 200 people attended and were treated to a lunch of roll kuchen and watermelon, and the music of the Sherk Street Power Trio.

Henry Klassen, the event's main organizer, was very happy with the turnout, and the more than \$8,000 raised.

Klassen told the gathering that, "One of the goals of these local projects is to create awareness of the work that the foodgrains bank is doing, but another

goal is to encourage the continuing need for your support."

Klassen said the event was intended to raise money to assist in paying to rent the land and defraying the significant costs of inputs. "One of the most costly inputs, besides the seed cost, is fertilizer," Klassen said. "The Tiessen family uses a very good fertilizer program on their planted corn acres, and these 10 acres received the same." Herbicide is another cost. The field may also be sprayed with fungicide, depending on conditions.

Canadian Foodgrains Bank was started by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in the mid 1970s as a way to allow Canadian farmers to donate grain for overseas aid. Initially, the foodgrains bank stored grain for shipment in emergency

situations. This allowed MCC to have food available when it was needed.

Over time, other denominational organizations became involved. Today, CFGB includes 15 denominations in Canada.

The organization has also stopped shipping Canadian grain overseas, opting to purchase grain closer to the places of need. Grain donated in Canada is sold here, with proceeds going to CFGB.

According to Tom Neufeld, MCC Ontario's CFGB Stewardship Coordinator, the federal government will match donations up to 4 to 1, to a total of \$25 million annually. Neufeld attended the Sun Parlor Growing Project fundraiser and addressed the crowd, thanked them, and led in a dedication of the corn field. ❧



PHOTO BY DENIS WIENS

*Women prepare food for a Canadian Foodgrains Bank fundraiser in Leamington.*



PHOTOS BY RUTH BERGEN BRAUN

*Jingle dress dancer Paula Weaselhead won the 55+ category at the Calgary Stampede Powwow in July. Weaselhead's friend and former neighbour, Ruth Bergen Braun, photographs powwow dancers to show them, their families and non-Indigenous people "just how breathtakingly beautiful they are."*

