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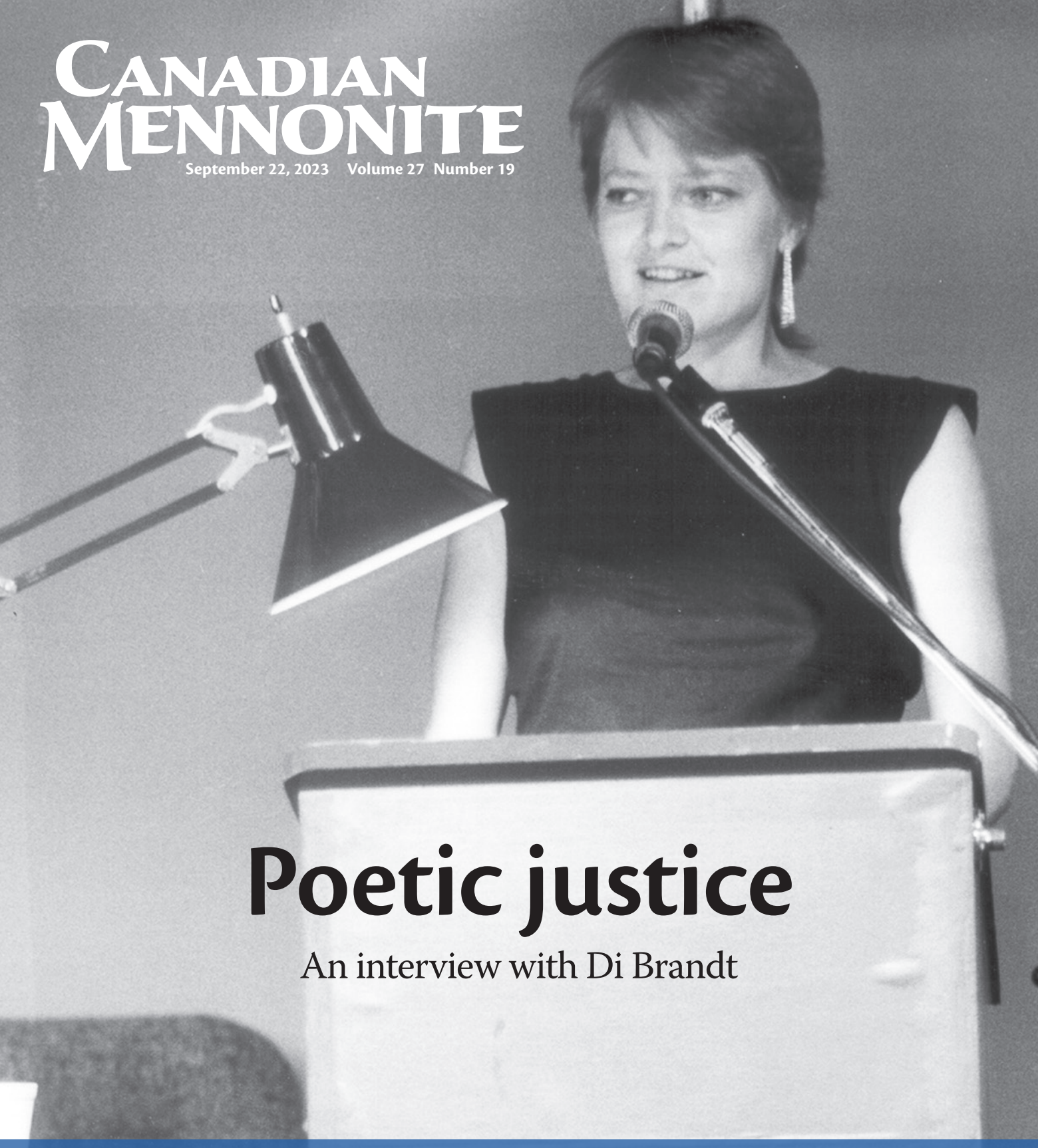

Poetic justice

An interview with Di Brandt

INSIDE

EDITORIAL

The institution of messiness

By Will Braun
editor@canadianmennonite.org

In the past few weeks, I've spoken with five people who have been deeply wounded by church institutions. I've met countless more in previous years.

I regularly receive notes from estranged church folk who want a place to belong and have vital contributions to make, but have been pushed aside.

One of the people who has been most helpful to me in my work with *Canadian Mennonite* in recent years—providing story ideas, asking brutally pointed questions and sharing occasional recipes—is someone various church leaders avoid.

I belong to a small church made up largely of people who have felt the blunt force of Mennonite institutional protectionism, as I have myself at a few points in life.

It's not that the people who get ousted, run over, or treated like lepers are always correct or innocent. My point is not that people who ask questions or poke at the status quo are always right. My point is that they belong, and the church must do better at dealing with difference and messiness.

We must do the hard work of welcoming questions and listening to those who are, by nature, crusty back-pew disturbers. (For some reason I have high tolerance for such characters).

The cover article in this issue is about Di Brandt (page 16). Brandt grew up in the Mennonite village of Reinland in southern Manitoba. Her 1987 book of poetry, *questions i asked my mother*, landed her squarely on the church blacklist. The book pushed boundaries and used language uncommon in Sunday School. Predictably, that's all many people in her village, and in much of the church community, could see.

They saw the fierceness but not the tenderness. They saw the sex but not the sincere grappling with modernity nor the celebration of some aspects of tradition. They could not see that perhaps Brandt was not trying to destroy the church but had something of value to offer. (And I don't mean to imply that her intended audience was just the church; it was much broader.)

In too many cases, the church response to Brandt has been vilification rather than engagement. That has been a loss for everyone.

Reprinting the title poem from Brandt's 1987 book in this issue (page 18) does not undo decades of exclusion but it says, in some small way, to Brandt, and others like her: your questions belong; you belong.

More broadly, it says, we've gotta stop running people over. We've gotta stop sacrificing people to protect budgets, decorum, power and distortions of tradition. We've gotta stop confusing the status quo for the kingdom of God. Our calling is higher than conflict avoidance, passive aggression or dismissive condescension.

Jesus' words to the Pharisees—who put personal and institutional agendas ahead of love—were direct.

In my experience, Christians of all stripes are susceptible to treating certain people as obstacles or adversaries rather than children of God.

Of course, institutional harshness is not the only reality in the church. Many people experience care, belonging and healthy conflict resolution. But lately, I have been overwhelmed by examples of the opposite.

Recently, two people I respect advised me to stay away from a controversial issue because it would be bad for the magazine as an institution. I'm not going to brashly fall on an anti-institutional sword just to court controversy, but if I avoid a sensitive topic primarily for the sake of an institutional budget, I do not deserve the trust of readers.

Institutions are not always wrong; they do much good. Truly. However, when the mission of love and reconciliation, messy as it is, becomes subservient to institutional protectionism, the people of God lose. Too often, the hard work people do to fortify institutions is exactly what drives some good people away.

The feature in this issue (page 7), as well as Ed Olfert's column (page 11) explore different angles of medical assistance in dying (MAID). This topic raises profound questions that touch vulnerable places in many readers' experience. As always, we welcome your feedback. Share your story.

We look forward to hosting an online discussion about MAID on October 25 at 8 p.m. EST. Stay tuned to canadianmennonite.org/events for details.

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ABOUT THE COVER

Poet Di Brandt reading at the Mennonite Bicentennial Festival in Toronto in 1986.

PHOTO: DAVID L. HUNSBERGER/MENNONITE ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO

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Soccer Moses

"A dad joke gone horribly right," is how Stephen Mason, Jars of Clay guitarist, describes his persona of Soccer Moses for Nashville SC of the MLS pro soccer league. Sporting a robe, an oversized grey beard and a huge smile, he can be found at games holding his sign, "Let my People Goal."

Source: Religion News Service

Facebook photo by Soccer Moses

Left leaning pulpit

Mainline Protestant clergy in the U.S. are much more liberal than their parishioners. According to the Public Religion Research Institute, half of clergy identify as Democrat and 14 percent as Republican. In the pews, 24 percent are Democrat and 36 percent Republican.

Source: Public Religion Research Institute

50 YEARS AGO

Leamington, Ont. — There seems to be a good deal of confusion these days over the conditions of migrant workers on tobacco and vegetable farms in south western Ontario.

The Department of Manpower and Immigration, Ottawa, released a report August 15 which attacked certain farmers, particularly those hiring Mexican Mennonite laborers, for providing "intolerable and inhumane" working conditions.

Other workers interviewed by the Toronto Globe and Mail and the London Evening Free Press disagreed with the government's evaluation. Ben Krahn working in Essex County and living in a garage with his wife and eight children, has few complaints "No, this is a good place to live. It's not that hard except for the heat."

Mennonite Reporter, Sept 17, 1973 issue

Blue bins an MCC legacy

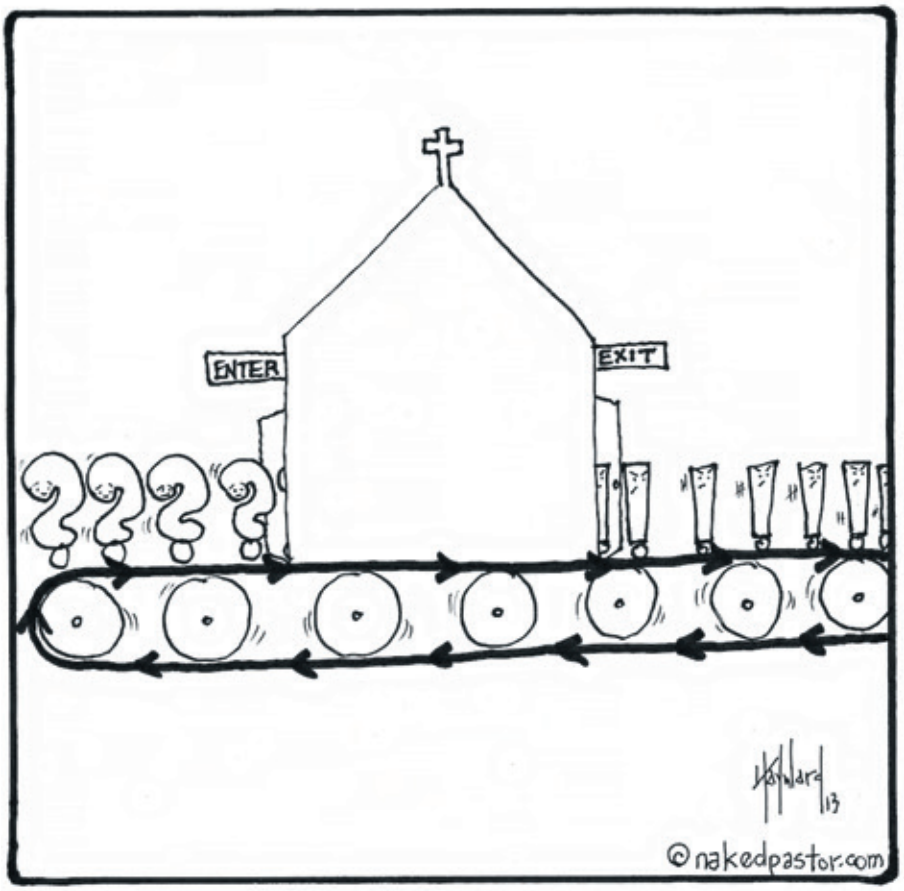
Forty years ago, in Waterloo Region, the first blue bin curb-side pickup began. Regional recycling drop-offs had been a Mennonite Central Committee project for years before becoming the strength behind the regional blue bin program. From there, the concept spread far and wide.

PHOTO BY LARA JAMESON FROM PEXELS

Mega music monopoly

Much of the most popular worship music originates from just four sources. WorshipLeaderResearch.com looked at the 38 most sung worship songs from 2010 to 2020 and found 36 could be traced back to Bethel Music, Hillsong Worship, Elevation Worship and Passion. These groups, or people associated with them, either wrote the songs or popularized them.

PHOTO BY SUPER CONCIERTOS FROM FLICKR



A moment from yesterday

Photo: Peter Regier fonds / Mennonite Heritage Archives

This photo depicts the founding of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada in 1902 at Tiefengrund, Sask. The men in this photo include (back row, l to r): David Epp, Laird, Sask.; Johann Dueck, Eigenheim, Sask; Heinrich Warkentin, Laird, Sask.; David Toews, Eigenheim, Sask.; Gerhard Epp, Eigenheim, Sask.; (front row, l to r): Benjamin Ewert, Edenburg, Man.; Peter Regier, Tiefengrund, Sask.; Johann M. Friesen, Altona, Man.; and J. E Sprunger, Berne, Indiana.

Sprunger's role was a mystery for many years, but now we know he worked on behalf of the General Conference Home Mission Board as an evangelist in Canada. His task was to visit "the far flung scattered new settlements of the brethren in the faith, bringing them spiritual encouragement." He was part of the organizing meeting in Tiefengrund that joined the Bergthaler (Man.) and Rosenorter (Sask.) church communities.

Text: Conrad Stoesz

MAID Mennonite Archival Image Database

archives.mhsc.ca

Readers write

Wrestling

I read your piece ("The duty of tension," June 16) and I've been wrestling with the content. It was a great editorial, and I commend your willingness to stomach the rhetoric for the sake of journalism (and in promotion of open-mindedness).

As a member of the Green Party of Manitoba, I had the opportunity to run against Max Bernier in the by-election but didn't get the chance to meet him. I was late to the conversation, but it had been agreed that no official debates would take place so as not to give Mr. Bernier a platform. I was disappointed because I felt a consensus that his politics are toxic and that we could all benefit from "popping the pimple" in a sterile public environment.

I was at a different rally, Pembina Valley Pride, and a few PPC supporters showed up to antagonize what had been a peaceful, well-organized march and fun celebration. I talked to them, and it was clear they had no intention to learn what Pride is about, to abide by community standards or to be respectful of its attendees.

Rudy Wiebe warned that peace shall destroy many. It can be hard to see those you care about supporting politicians who objectively mislead people. It's hard to do politics in this space where we neither sufficiently hold politicians responsible for what they say, nor sufficiently inform the public on what those words mean. It's hard to fight the political apathy this creates.

Mennonites have a history of being in politics without being in politics. Mennonite Central Committee is an aid-first religious organization. We let the laity preach. These are anomalies in our culture. The way in which we do community may be part of a solution.

Nicolas Geddert, Winnipeg

Feels detrimental

Thanks for your article on congregational closures that have occurred recently ("The facility of faith," August 25). It's good to learn how folks are handling our changing social and church environment. I'm a member of Waterloo Kitchener United Mennonite Church (WKUM), which was featured in the article. Our process has been complex and has benefitted from the perspectives of many people. However, the concern of Norm Dyck to suggest that some church leaders have "arrested" imaginations feels detrimental to the process and does not reflect the diligence and hard work of the WKUM Vision Team.

Ed Janzen, New Hamburg, Ontario

Be in Touch

• Send letters to letters@canadianmennonite.org.

Milestones

Weddings

Fox/Good—Erin Fox and Josh Good, August 5, 2023 at Breslau Mennonite Church, Breslau Ont.
Neufeld/Wassmer—Jessica Neufeld and Brandon Wassmer, August 19, 2023 at Niagara United Mennonite Church, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Deaths

Chemerika—Nestor, 84, (b. Jan. 4, 1939; d. July 25, 2023), Bethany Mennonite Church, Virgil, Ont.
Dueck—Helga (nee Driedger), 91, (b. July 6, 1932; d. Aug. 25, 2023), Leamington United Mennonite Church, Leamington, Ont.
Dyck—Dieter, 68, (b. Aug. 12, 1955; d. Aug. 30, 2023), Ottawa Mennonite Church, Ottawa, Ont.
Dyck—Nancy (nee Hiebert), 62, (b. Feb. 21, 1961; d. Aug. 4, 2023), Leamington United Mennonite Church, Leamington, Ont.
Ediger—Siegfried, 97, (b. Feb. 22, 1926; d. Aug. 10, 2023), First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man.
Epp—Hilda (nee Dyck), 96, (b. Sept. 25, 1926; d. June 13, 2023), First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man.
Falk—Vera, 82, (b. Mar. 7, 1941 ; d. June 20, 2023) Pleasant Point Mennonite Church, Clavet, Sask
Friesen—Louise (nee Epp), 104, (b. Nov 23, 1918; d. Aug 22, 2023), Nutana Park Mennonite Church Saskatoon, Sask.
Klippenstein—Henry, 93, (b. Aug. 6, 1930; d. Aug. 26, 2023), Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship, Vancouver, B.C.
Palson—Pat (nee Collins), 86, (b. Jan. 17, 1937; d. Aug 26, 2023), Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man.
Peters—Margaret (nee Koop), 95, (b. May 5, 1928; d. Aug. 19, 2023), Pleasant Point Mennonite Church., Clavet, Sask.
Roes—David "John," 87, (b. Mar. 5, 1936; d. Aug. 28, 2023) Poole Mennonite Church, Ontario
Roth—Sandra Jean (nee Bender), 79, (b. Mar. 8, 1944; d. Aug. 17, 2023), Steinmann Mennonite Church, Baden, Ont.
Stephen—Ted, 87, (b. Aug. 9, 1936; d. Aug. 23, 2023), Grace Mennonite Church, St. Catharines, Ont.
Stumm—Hildegard (nee Thiessen), 77, (b. Oct. 9, 1945; d. Aug, 16, 2023), Calgary First Mennonite Church, Calgary, Alta.
Zacharias—Jessie, 85, (b. Nov. 4, 1937; d. July 14, 2023), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man.

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

FEATURE

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER ALEXANDROV FROM PIXABAY

The gift of life, the question of death

As Canada prepares to extend medical assistance in dying to those with mental illness, six people reflect on suffering, the law and faith

By Aaron Epp

Robert Bruinsma remembers the day his friend, Sam, told him he was going to die.

It was a few days before Christmas 2017, and Bruinsma was visiting Sam (not his real name) in the hospital. Sam told Bruinsma that his request for medical assistance in dying (MAID) had been approved and would be carried out on New Year's Day.

A beloved father, educator and hockey coach, Sam had lived with cancer for 13 years. By early 2017, it had spread to his blood and spinal fluid. Because of a severely compromised immune system, Sam had recurring bouts of double pneumonia and sepsis that sent him to emergency hospital care, where he almost died several times.

After undergoing painful and aggressive experimental treatments, Sam's oncologist informed him that the treatments were unsuccessful. He had three months to live.

Soon after, Sam was again admitted to hospital with double pneumonia.

"I remember him saying, 'I'm looking forward to being rid of this body,'" Bruinsma recalled in a 2018 column he wrote for *Christian Courier*.

During the last few years of Sam's illness and hospitalization, the two friends spoke frequently about

end-of-life issues.

"We both agreed that life was a precious gift from God; but, as Christians, we did not believe that biological existence was to be idolized," Bruinsma wrote. "Both of us expressed fear of dying because of the needless suffering it often causes, but we were not afraid of death, because it has been swallowed up in Christ's victory on the cross and nullified by the Easter promise of resurrection."

While Bruinsma mourned the death of his friend, he believed Sam's decision was a courageous one, and a testament to faith in resurrection through Christ.

"Life is precious and a gift of God," Bruinsma said in a phone interview last month. "At the same time, we're human beings with agency and responsibility."

Prior to his friend's death, Bruinsma had contemplated the value of Canada offering assisted dying as a form of end-of-life care. People receive life-altering medical interventions at all stages of their lives. Why, Bruinsma reasoned, should the end of life be different?

"It didn't take me very long to come to the conclusion that something like MAID is worthy of consideration," he said, adding later: "There's no question in my mind that [MAID] is going to be a concern for Christians in a more intentional way sooner rather than later."

Who qualifies?

MAID first became legal in June 2016. The law made provision for medically assisted death for "competent adults" who suffer from "a grievous and irremediable medical condition that causes them enduring and intolerable suffering" and "whose deaths are reasonably foreseeable."

In March 2021, the law was amended to permit MAID in additional situations, including for people with disabilities and chronic diseases who are "in an advanced state of irreversible decline in capability" and have "intolerable physical or psychological suffering that cannot be alleviated under conditions the person considers acceptable."

According to Health Canada, more than 31,000 Canadians received assistance in dying between 2016 and 2021. In 2021, the total number of MAID provisions increased by 32 per cent over the previous years, mirroring comparable increases in previous years.

The legislation is set to change again next year. Starting on March 17, 2024, persons suffering solely from a mental illness and who meet all other eligibility criteria will be able to access MAID in Canada. The change was supposed to happen this past March, but the government delayed it by a year.

Last February, Ed Fast, Conservative MP for Abbotsford, introduced a bill that would prevent the expansion of MAID eligibility to include mental illness. A final vote on the bill could come in October.

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), of which Mennonite Church Canada is an affiliate, is urging Canadian Christians to support the bill. "The EFC has consistently opposed the legalization of euthanasia and assisted suicide," Julia Beazley, the EFC's director of public policy, said in an email. "These must not be seen as the solution to suffering and despair. We've also consistently pushed for the strongest possible safeguards and limitations on MAID."

Three in five Canadians (61 per cent) say they support the current MAID law in Canada, according to polling by Angus Reid Institute and Cardus, a nonpartisan Christian think tank based in Hamilton, Ontario.

Data released in February by Angus Reid and Cardus shows that the same support is not evident for the proposed changes to MAID legislation. Just three in 10 Canadians (31 per cent) say they support the concept of offering MAID for irremediable mental illness. Half (51 per cent) oppose this idea.

"That is a really important finding as Parliament looks at this expansion—to recognize the discomfort Canadians feel about it," said Rebecca Vachon, program director for health at Cardus.

Cardus does not consider MAID a good policy, Vachon said, but since it is the law, the think tank is committed to addressing its concerns through constructive engagement with public policy.

For Vachon, the topic of MAID begs the question: "How do we as individuals and within our society's institutions . . . provide the support that we all need to flourish, rather than providing an end to someone's life?"

Vulnerability and dependence are part of what it means to be created by God, and people will encounter times in their lives when those things are magnified, she said. "I think the Christian response to that . . . is to love and to provide that love to others, as well as accept that love when we ourselves are experiencing vulnerability and dependency.

"It really is vulnerability and dependency that creates relationships," she added. "It's at the basis of what it means to be a community."

Vachon uses the word "euthanasia" when talking about MAID because she believes the term "medical assistance in dying" obscures the reality.

"Of course, everyone wants to have assistance as they're facing suffering and as they're facing death, but what that assistance could include is care that doesn't involve actively ending someone's life."

Disability and belonging

Like Vachon, Rhonda Wiebe is concerned about MAID.

The Winnipeg resident has lived with disability since she was 13 years old. Now 63, she has multiple disabilities and has undergone 27 surgeries. For decades, she has been a disability rights advocate.

Palliative care is not included in the Canada Health Act, Wiebe noted, and thus, Canadians have no right to it. It is Wiebe's belief that until every Canadian who wants palliative care has access to it, Canada has no business offering MAID.

Wiebe isn't opposed to allowing MAID as it was initially legislated—for mentally competent adults whose deaths are reasonably foreseeable. She is concerned, however, that in an

Tim De Jonge

Paul Bergen

Rhonda Wiebe

under-resourced medical system, MAID is becoming a go-to solution.

"I predict using MAID as a panacea for our very broken healthcare system will be a disaster, and the people who will feel it the most are people with disabilities," she said.

Wiebe pointed to a December 2022 CBC report that told the story of Jacquie Holyoak, a 59-year-old Ontario woman who was considering accessing MAID due to the debilitating pain of living with fibromyalgia. It's a choice, however, she might not contemplate if her disability benefits didn't leave her struggling to make ends meet.

"I'm just really exhausted … I need someone to help me, and I've been asking everywhere," Holyoak told CBC. "And unless you have money, you're just not going to get the help."

For Wiebe, stories like these are examples of ongoing ableism in a society that can sometimes send the message that the solution to disability is death.

"I would argue the 'problem' of disability lies more in external social, physical, attitudinal and architectural barriers," Wiebe wrote in a column published by the *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Wiebe gave the example of her sight. She is legally blind, so if you give her something in 12-point font, she can't read it. However, if you give her a document in large print, she no longer has a problem.

Similarly, Wiebe uses a wheelchair at times. She is "disabled" by the environment around her—stairs, curbs with no access cuts and doors that don't open automatically. But when changes are made externally, she becomes self-reliant.

"The problem doesn't lie inside us," she said in an interview. "It lies in the barriers in front of us."

Society's general attitude toward people with disabilities "tells me that I'm not an equal citizen in Canada," Wiebe added. "You get the message every day that you're not wanted on the voyage."

Wiebe continues to advocate for herself and others with disabilities, which includes critique of MAID legislation.

"When we face the social message that it's better to be dead than disabled, the option of assisted suicide and euthanasia . . . puts our very lives at risk," Wiebe wrote in the *Free Press*.

She hopes Christians consider this when they're thinking about the implications of MAID.

"What I do value about [Christians] is that some of them have a sense of fairness and justice," Wiebe said. "What they need to get on their maps is that people with disabilities need justice too, and we belong. We belong."

Accompaniment

When a resident in the long-term care home where he was chaplain approached Tim De Jonge in 2018 about supporting him as he sought MAID, De Jonge was prepared.

After MAID was legalized, De Jonge, who is an ordained minister in the Christian Reformed Church, spent time reflecting on what he would do if such a request came his way. He concluded that he wanted to support people nearing the end of their lives, whether they choose MAID or not.

The care home resident had end-stage liver disease and wasn't eligible for a transplant. He had almost no friends or family. De Jonge provided spiritual and emotional support to him, helped plan his funeral and was present for his death.

"It felt significant and meaningful to support someone who had had a pretty tough life … [and] to provide ritual and meaning for him," De Jonge said, noting the man was in physical pain. "I also had empathy with his decision to seek MAID, knowing that he was dying and knowing that his death [without MAID] likely would be uncomfortable."

De Jonge, who is now a spiritual health practitioner at Kingston General Hospital in Kingston, Ontario, has been present three times MAID has been administered. He's also counselled numerous patients as they have wrestled with whether God would approve if they chose MAID.

"I always tell them that only they can discern that as an individual," De Jonge said. "I can't speak for God or give them the peace they're looking for." He knows some patients whose discernment led to MAID, and others whose discernment did not. "I can see that it's a humane option in the face of suffering. I don't know if I would choose it, but I think it's a defensible option for sincere Christians."

Paul Bergen, manager of the spiritual care team at the University of Alberta Hospital in Edmonton, agrees.

"I don't feel any need to judge somebody else when they're choosing [MAID]," said Bergen, who has served as a chaplain for more than 20 years. He was a Mennonite pastor before that. "My role as a chaplain is certainly to help them think through [their options] as thoroughly as they can [and help discern] how this does or does not reflect values they have. But the choices they make about how they want to move forward are their choices."

Bergen often thinks about a patient he worked with many years ago, before MAID was legalized. The man had spinal cancer that caused him excruciating pain. He had been a drug addict and his medical team was going to extraordinary lengths to remediate his pain because his previous experience with drugs rendered typical doses of pain medication ineffective.

"Whenever questions come up—is MAID good, is it ethical—I always think about this guy," Bergen said. "Would I have wanted to say to this patient and his family 'we have this option [MAID]?' Yes, absolutely. That would have been ideal for this individual. . . ."

"There are people that we can do nothing for, and MAID really and truly is the only compassionate option to remediate the suffering."

Both Bergen and De Jonge expressed concerns that the medical system in Canada isn't doing enough to provide health supports such as palliative care and home care, and that people are choosing death when they might not if they had better supports.

De Jonge is also concerned that there's a cultural message that people are better off dead than disabled, and that MAID perpetuates this thinking.

"I worry we're not doing enough to help people see that they're not a burden," he said.

Conversation with God

MAID has shifted how many Canadians think about dying, said Jane Kuepfer, who is the Schlegel Specialist in Spirituality and Aging at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ontario. In the past, death was something people waited for. Now, they can plan for it.

"In some ways, the reality of MAID in our society can encourage all of us to be more intentional about thinking about death and what matters to us in death," said Kuepfer, who has extensive experience as a spiritual caregiver in long-term care homes and in the community. She is a registered psychotherapist, a spiritual director and an ordained minister in the Mennonite church.

Christians are called to be a compassionate presence in society and to help people who are suffering, Kuepfer added.

"MAID is a wake-up call to us to make sure we are really as a community caring for people who are ill and who are suffering," she said. "I would hate to see anybody consider MAID because they're afraid that there won't be enough support for them to go through what they see in their future."

"For people of faith, living and dying is always a conversation with God," Kuepfer added. "A conversation seeking meaning, seeking consolation, seeking relationship."

De Jonge hopes Christians educate themselves on a topic that is highly nuanced.

"It's important for people to think about what it means to value life as God's created it," he said, "and what it means also to take seriously people's suffering."

This article is a collaboration between Canadian Mennonite *and* Christian Courier.

For discussion

1. What experiences have you had of being with someone near the end of life?

2. Under what conditions, if any, would you support a person's choice of MAID?

3. Do you think choosing a time for death devalues life as a gift from God?

4. How much do you think the availability of palliative care, or lack of it, affects the use of MAID?

5. Do you think MAID sends the message that people are better off dead than disabled?

6. How can the church best support people who are suffering?

—By Barb Draper

In the Image

Choosing death

Ed Olfert

My sister Helen is a retired nurse who spent much of her career working with palliative patients. In the last few years of her working life, she encountered medical assistance in dying (MAID). Though it was a steep learning curve for everyone on the floor and was seen by some as being very much at odds with what palliative care is about, Helen counted on her sense of curiosity to lead her into the process.

Eventually, she was allowed to be present when several of her patients carried out their final wish to die, aided by supportive professionals.

Certainly, there's been resistance to MAID. A chaplain at a seniors home was reported to have told folks that MAID is simply about "children wanting to get at their parents' money sooner."

Helen's passion was engaged. She did some research and soon let it be known that she was willing to speak to groups about MAID. Her presentation would be information-based: what are the regulations, what are the criteria as decisions are made as to whether patients will indeed qualify? Also, Helen told stories of people she has encountered in the process: people who requested MAID, their support-givers and the folks who administer the drugs that are used. All the people involved are treated gently in her stories.

There is nothing in Helen's presentation that is morals-based, nothing that points to the "right" response or the "biblical" response. Contrary reactions to the concept of assisted dying are respected, as are all comments.

Helen has presented her MAID topic about half a dozen times, and interestingly, each of them has been to a faith-based, largely Mennonite, audience. She does not approach her topic as a faith-based conviction but is totally fine if others do.

PHOTO BY JON TYSON FROM UNSPLASH

Contrary reactions to the concept of assisted dying are respected.

I have been present at about half of those presentations, both as support for Helen and because I too carry that family curiosity for concepts seen as "out there."

In my extended family, choices have been made to end lives through MAID. Others are firmly opposed. It's all good. One of the passions that Helen brings to her conversations is a conviction for patient autonomy. Ultimately, the one looking at ending his or her own life should be the decision-maker.

That being said, certainly there is an extensive screen through which a person requesting this process must pass. There are many questions, hard questions, crucial questions. Helen and I have often talked about feeling assured that the criteria to use this service should always be difficult. The screen needs to have small holes. As the conversation grows to wonder how people with mental health issues might fulfill the criteria, slow and thoughtful discernment is needed about how the screen is designed.

I'm comfortable with a health care system, including the political component, that is showing leadership in this complicated topic. I'm not sure if I would choose to die by intentional choice, but I appreciate that choice. I have loved ones around me who deal with quality-of-life issues far harder than my own. I am at peace with them having this option, without being held captive by a notion of what God decrees.

The bottom line, given all the filters that are in place, is that the decision be left to the person who is considering MAID. It isn't for a spouse, children, siblings, parents, loved ones to hold controlling opinions. That's when it gets messy; that's when the outcome will be unhappy.

Perhaps we sell ourselves and our spirituality short when we are swayed by another's insistence that God opposes MAID. Our insistence ignores the quality of life that is someone's reality and fails to respect the spirituality of the one on that journey.

Our God is about compassion and love. Let's live that.

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Tales From the Unending Story

To be no longer known

Joshua Penfold

Psalm 103 contains familiar and beautiful lines that speak of the Lord as being gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. They're lovely, but that's not what struck me in my most recent read-through. Instead, I was surprised by:

> "For he knows our devisings,
> recalls that we are dust.
> Man's days are like grass,
> like the bloom of the field,
> thus he blooms—
> when the wind passes by
> him, he is gone,
> and his place will no longer
> know him."

CANADIAN MENNONITE PHOTO

I like to think that I have not skirted around the reality of death in my life, even tried to embrace death, knowing that it is to be a central part of my faith: we're to die to ourselves, only in death do we truly live, out of death comes resurrection.

I sometimes dwell on my own mortality as a way of familiarizing or acclimatizing myself, so that when death does come knocking in my life, whether for me or a loved one, I haven't steered so clear of death's reality that I have no emotional or spiritual tools to turn to. I want to be ready, familiar, even hospitable to the inevitable companion to life. I want to face death well, whatever that means.

But reading this passage made me realize that I'm all talk. I might read about and talk about death, but the reality is that we're not well acquainted. I've lost grandparents and peripheral people in my life, even suddenly and tragically, but death has not truly shaken my immediate world or barged in unwelcome and played dirty in my life. It's easy to think upon death, even one's own mortality, when it's always at arm's length and is only a theoretical spiritual practice.

Reading this section of scripture made me realize how haunted I still am by the idea of my own mortality. It made me realize that I'm not as sure of my afterlife existence as I let on. Scripture's idea of my place no longer knowing me is terrifying. The short time I have here on this earth, knowing how much more may continue on without me—that's something I'm currently lamenting. There's so much to do and see and try that I simply will never get a chance to explore and participate in.

I'm nearing what could be considered mid-life, and I'm realizing just how quickly it all passes by. I may be the centre of my own life, but I'm only a minuscule blip in the history of all things, and when I'm gone, as the scripture says, my place will no longer know me. I'm trying to rethink that, to find peace in that, that I live and then die and fade away, just like everything else.

Admittedly, I'm sometimes saddened and overwhelmed by the idea that when I'm gone my place will no longer know me. Very few people make the history books, to be remembered for generations to come. Most of us will fairly quickly fade beyond memory, like the bloom that was there and then is blown away. And maybe I can, strangely, find that encouraging in a humbling kind of way. Maybe I can take my life a little more lightly and be a bit less anxious. Maybe I can resist becoming nihilistic, seeing life as meaningless, but be humbled in remembering that God's great love holds all things, including my life and death, together.

And all I have to hold together are the two things I'll now remember from this Psalm: that the Lord is gracious and compassionate and that I am dust that will be here and then be blown away and forgotten.

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From Our Leaders

Hear the climate call

Sandy Plett

It's worth celebrating that the regions of MC Canada have identified the climate crisis as a priority ministry area in recent years. Like all priorities, where the rubber really hits the road is not in reports and lists and minutes from meetings, but where two or three (or 200 or 300) are gathered—the congregation.

That said, the congregation is not automatically a climate response hub. Here are some ideas to help your congregation hear our Creator's call to this work.

1. Listen to each other and pray. Listen to the children, the parents, the grandparents about how they feel and what they think about the intensifying climate crisis. Listen without offering easy answers. Listen without being defensive. Then listen further; to Indigenous voices, to the vulnerable in areas of the world facing the worst impacts of the climate crisis, to those who are calling you to action. Listen and pray. And when you pray, listen to see where you are being led.

2. Build a community in which the climate crisis is recognized and named as a priority. If we want to be healthily engaged with this work, living joyful lives as people of faith, we're all going to need others to walk alongside us in the work, the worry, the successes and the failures. We'll need the strength of community to face the increasing impacts of the changing climate, and what better place to start than within the congregation?

3. Balance your energies between action and reflection. In practical terms, this means making time for action and practice beyond Sunday mornings and committee meetings. It also means making time for learning and reflection to shape and guide your action. Jesus modelled this balance so well.

WIKIPEDIA COMMONS PHOTO BY DCPEOPLEANDEVENTSOF2017

Listen to the children. Listen without being defensive.

Mennonite Church Canada has a new partnership that can provide some great help in all these areas. For the Love of Creation (FLC) is a Canadian interfaith initiative by which faith groups across Canada work together to come up with advocacy and engagement invitations that invite broad involvement, creating movements bigger than any one faith group could create on their own. By joining FLC, MC Canada has gained a seat at the creating table, and we are now looking for ways for those opportunities to flow into our 200-plus congregations to find legs, wheels, pens . . . whatever the action calls for.

FLC comes up with new initiatives every three or four months, so it's important to keep an eye on the FLC website to see what's up next. Opportunities are pitched in ways that any group can pick them up and run with them in their own context and way.

After you've checked out FLC, head over to MC Canada's climate action page to see what is happening in our own house. Right now, you'll find information about our Emissions Reduction Grant. Consider applying to help fund a project in your own church building or property to not only reduce emissions, but to raise the conversation about climate solutions that can be enacted right within the walls (or furnace rooms) of your own congregation. The application deadline is Sept. 30. If you need a little more time, start planning your application for the 2024 season of the Emissions Reduction Grant.

Sandy Plett serves as climate action coordinator for Mennonite Church Canada and can be reached at splett@mennonitechurch.ca.

Mind and Soul

From Zacchaeus to climate justice

Randy Haluza-DeLay

An encounter with Jesus is a call for transformation. Such is the story of Zacchaeus. Jesus noticed him watching from a tree and invited himself for dinner. Zacchaeus must have known Jesus often preached against those with wealth who took advantage of others—as was the reputation of tax collectors such as Zacchaeus—but accepted the hosting request. After dinner, Zacchaeus announced that everyone from whom he had taken too much would receive back four times the amount. That was on top of giving away half his existing wealth to the economically marginalized.

Transformation!

Zacchaeus not only returned what he had received, he gave back more. Apparently he recognized that the losses experienced by the people from whom he got his wealth set them back and they now needed additional resources to improve their lives. Zacchaeus now saw that his personal history required responsibility for reparations.

Zacchaeus is an analogy for climate justice.

"Historical responsibility" is the first principle of any notions of fairness, including climate justice. Whoever caused something is responsible. Canada is part of a block of industrialized, wealthy nations, primarily in the Global North, that are responsible for 92 percent of climate-changing carbon emissions historically.

On the table at international negotiations this year is something called "loss and damage." After three decades of trying, the countries most vulnerable to rising seas, crop failures, floods, wrecked infrastructure, lost social cohesion, disappearing ways of life and other climate damages—countries often least able to cope with these climate-related losses—have convinced the powerful of the world that they deserve assistance in recovering from that which they did not cause.

Climate change has erased one-fifth of vulnerable countries' wealth over the past two decades, according to a report by the coalition of countries known as the Vulnerable 20 Group. Canada has contributed more emissions than the continent of Africa and still emits more than its "fair share," adding further injury to existing damage. Interestingly, Canada is on the committee working out details for a loss and damage fund. Let's just say that the devil is in the details.

The details include how the loss and damage fund will have adequate resources to cover the effects of the changing climate. The form of funding is another detail; grants are better than loans, since the latter add to the debt crisis that already causes many countries to send money back to lenders in the Global North by reducing health, education and social programs. Perhaps the most important detail is ensuring that affected countries lead decision-making in the loss and damage program. Fund details are to be presented at the annual United Nations climate meeting in December.

Climate "reparations" is a more accurate term for "loss and damage." Reparations refer to financial payment for past harms, like Zacchaeus demonstrated. Loss and damage funding is repayment to peoples marginalized by a global system that has created both economic subordination and the crisis of climate change.

Civil society organizations from South and North will be ramping up advocacy for an effective loss and damage program. These include For the Love of Creation (of which the Mennonite Central Committee is an actively engaged member) and the church-based justice network KAIROS, which will release a policy brief on loss and damage in early autumn.

I had a hand in creating that KAIROS document. You and I have a hand in advocating to our political leaders that we want to see justice done, in the spirit of Zacchaeus.

PHOTO BY ENRIQUE FROM PIXABAY

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Singing and praying with Indigenous Christians

By Sarah Kathleen Johnson, Katie Graber and Anneli Loepp Thiessen

In order to fully embrace the diversity of the church and to live into God's reign of justice and peace, it is necessary to sing and pray with Indigenous Christians.

Songs are a force for solidarity. Solidarity is a source of action. Action in solidarity with one another, with insight and leadership from Indigenous communities, is needed to address the ongoing harm of colonialism and live into God's vision of liberation for all people.

Voices Together provides new opportunities to sing and pray in worship with diverse Indigenous communities in Canada and the United States. The 13 songs and five worship resources in *Voices Together* with connections to Indigenous communities include three songs and one prayer written by Indigenous Mennonite musicians and leaders, as well as a land acknowledgement developed for this hymnal.

These songs and prayers with connections to Indigenous communities have been offered as gifts to the wider church. To receive them as gifts, it is necessary to sing them rather than set them aside. To sing these songs respectfully, with attention to the contexts from which they come, is not misappropriation—it is the intention of those individuals and communities who gave permission and encouragement to share these resources in *Voices Together*.

Each of these songs was selected in consultation with a group brought together because of their experience and expertise in relation to Indigenous justice. This group of consultants provided general guidance and evaluated and offered recommendations regarding specific songs and prayers. The committee then sought permission directly from Indigenous individuals and communities to include these resources in *Voices Together*, in addition to standard copyright processes.

Learning to love these songs and to pray these prayers, to know them in our hearts and bodies, to let them change who we are as individuals and communities, is the best way to receive these gifts. Our denominational, congregational and personal commitments to Indigenous justice must be expressed in worship, because worship forms our faith and action.

Here are six practical suggestions to get you started:

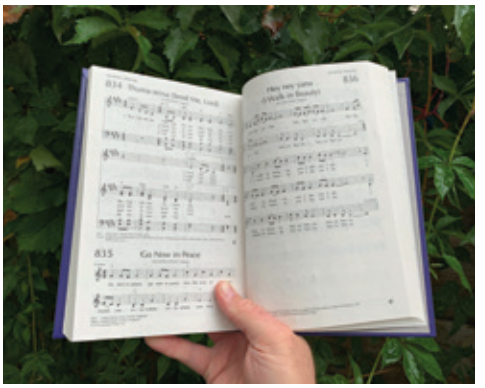

PHOTO BY AARON EPP

1. Connect with Indigenous individuals and leaders in your congregation, church conference and local community. Join in the good work they are doing. Empower them to give leadership in worship.

2. Learn some of the songs in *Voices Together* yourself as a pastor, worship leader, song leader, or worshiper. Listen to recordings, paying attention to pronunciation and instrumentation. Read the reference notes in the *Accompaniment Edition* and *Worship Leader Edition*. Research the context, beginning with the ascription line at the bottom of the hymnal page and resources provided in this guide.

3. Choose to learn a song by heart as a community by including it in worship every Sunday for six weeks, and once a month for the following year. Connect the content of the song to your worship life in relation to scripture readings, preaching themes, and prayers. Teach it to children in faith formation classes.

4. Tell the stories of songs and prayers in worship, print them in the bulletin, include them in a newsletter or in social media posts. Learn about and pray for the communities the songs come from. Keep each song or prayer connected to the community it comes from, while also building deep connections with it in your own community and entering into it as a way to connect with God.

5. Embrace vocables (non-lexical syllables), a common practice among some Indigenous communities to structure a song, to frame other text, or as an expression of praise.

6. Consider carefully when to use drums. Not all songs with connections to Indigenous communities should be accompanied by drums. Read the notes on individual songs in the *Accompaniment Edition* and listen to recordings from the context of origin as a guide.

Indigenous Peoples Day (June 21) and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (Sept. 30) may be particularly suitable occasions for incorporating songs and resources with connections to Indigenous communities in worship.

However, it is important to sing and pray with these materials throughout the year so that they are known and loved and become part of an ongoing journey toward truth and reconciliation. ⁂

The resources in Voices Together *with connections to Indigenous communities have the following numbers: 8, 24, 51, 59, 85, 128, 181, 400, 443, 562, 651, 742, 836, 850, 861, 864, 878, 1061. The full version of this article will be uploaded to voicestogetherhymnal.org.*

Poetic justice

Renowned poet Di Brandt reflects on village poetry, the traditional-modern clash and exclusion

By A.S. Compton

For Di Brandt, being a poet is a natural extension of her upbringing in the Manitoba Mennonite village of Reinland. She says the hymns of her youth were poetic, and poetry was part of sermons and family life.

Speaking by video from her home in Winnipeg, Brandt says she was "brought up in the old way" of having to memorize poems and recite them to her grandmother on holidays and her birthday.

From early on, poetry was a "natural inclination" for Brandt. "It was just natural for me to become a poet," she says. As a child, and well into her adult life, she wrote poems privately, secretively. She had a drawer full of poems that she kept to herself.

Since publishing her first book of poetry, *questions i asked my mother,* in 1987, Brandt has published 12 more books, including poetry, fiction and essay collections, some in collaboration with others. She has won much recognition for her work. Her awards include Gold and Silver National Magazine Awards, the McNally Robinson Manitoba Book of the Year, the Canadian Authors' Association National Poetry Prize and two Governor General's Award for Poetry nominations, among many other honours.

Most recently she received the 2023 Manitoba Arts Award of Distinction for "the highest level of artistic excellence" in her province, and her "contribution to the development of the arts in Manitoba." The prize, awarded by the Manitoba Arts Council, comes with $30,000.

Brandt's latest book, *The Sweetest Dance on Earth* (Turnstone Press, 2022), is a new and selected collection of her poetry, stretching across her career, from the deep curiosity of her childhood as expressed in her early writing, to the joys of watching her own children grow, all while investigating what it means to be Mennonite and how to relate to the world in honest, curious and loving ways. The breadth of her work addresses many subjects, including a celebration of the Canadian prairies, and intercultural and environmental concerns.

Embrace or exclusion

From her home communities in Manitoba, the response has been different. Despite accolades from the literary community, posts at several universities, and guest residencies in Germany, Scotland, New York and Switzerland, it took 50 years for the school from which she graduated—Canadian Mennonite Bible College (CMBC), now Canadian Mennonite University (CMU)—to officially invite her back to do a reading. That happened last year. She had spoken at the school previously, but she says last year was the first official invitation from faculty.

The relationship between Brandt and the Mennonite church-based communities of Manitoba has been fraught. As she gained her literary voice and vision, the church did not accept her message, which sometimes scrutinized the suppression of women's ideas and expressions. Her questions and creative vision were not welcome.

Timing

Brandt reached high school the first year that school buses ran from her village to the high school in nearby Winkler. Then she graduated from high school the year that the federal government started offering student loans for postsecondary education. This enabled Brandt to become "financially independent" at age 17. She did not need permission to go to university and could choose to study what she liked.

Brandt says this was "an incredible thing" for her, coming from a village in which "the women were not allowed to speak in public or have their own money or really have their own opinions, or make all that many choices about their lives."

While attending school in Winnipeg, she found herself divided in two. She was a villager who had lived close to the land as part of a tight-knit community, and she was a woman who was learning to navigate public transit, speak with strangers and attain postsecondary education. The move from Reinland to Winnipeg was a "huge leap" from a traditionalist, close-to-the-earth society to a modern, cosmopolitan, urban space.

"Inside myself, I never stopped being that barefoot peasant village person," she says, but she was also learning to live in a world that knew nothing of that village life. It was "incredibly bewildering," she recalls.

Brandt needed to weave these two selves together to become a professional literary writer.

While studying at CMBC, she was actively encouraged to become a literary writer. However, after the publication of her first poetry collection some years after graduation, she was not welcome back at the school. Like other Mennonite writers at the time, she found herself unwelcome in her home community, church and extended family.

Brandt says there was mostly a "defensive response" to her writing among her home communities. Some people felt that dealing with patriarchal abuses and other issues she raised would threaten the safety of the community, with its separatist values.

She says, "it wasn't so much the 'message' [of her work], it was being the first one to step out in these ways. I could have said anything in my writing and it would have been the same. It was the reaching out, the inventing of new roles and functions for women, that was the issue. The subject matter and the 'message' was secondary, though of course looking back we can easily see how they were related to one another."

PHOTO BY MORTIMER MACKENZIE

"I was accused of trying to destroy the fabric of the culture, that I was trying to defame the church leaders," she recalls. For villagers who had tried hard to live under the societal radar, appearing in books and in the media was jarring. "I understand what a big shock it was," Brandt says repeatedly.

New Mennonite writers

With the publication of *questions i asked my mother*, Brandt became part of the early movement of what came to be known as the "new Mennonite writers," a group of poets and novelists in Winnipeg who were trying to name their dual identities and experiences as Mennonites and as modern Canadians. In their unique ways, they have explored that upbringing, reflecting on the beauty and generosity of it while also bringing light to the darker experiences within their communities and the Mennonite church in Canada. They do not write Sunday School material, but their stories are important reflections the church should hear.

She notes that "the Mennonite churches and colleges elsewhere in Canada and widely across the U.S. gave a much more nuanced response to the new Mennonite writing of Manitoba. The International Mennonite/s Writing conference that began at Conrad Grebel College in 1990, and publications like the *Mennonite Quarterly Review* and the *Journal of Mennonite Studies* have developed extensive languages of appreciation and study of the new Mennonite writing, and it would be great if the Manitoba Mennonite churches and colleges could do the same."

Modern-traditionalist dialogue

While modernity was encroaching on the Mennonite communities in Manitoba at a bewildering pace, Brandt says she and the other new Mennonite writers were "trying to make sense of those changes as they were happening." In fact, they "wanted to preserve some of that traditional sensibility" amidst the change. "We were actually conservationists in many ways," she says.

She reacts to those who mock traditionalism as regressive in itself. "I don't think that is true either," she says. Brandt sees value in some of the ways that traditionalist values push back against the "excesses" of the modern and postmodern world. She says this is "a good time to champion some of the traditionalist ideas, such as living simply, valuing local community, cherishing music and poetry, and staying close to the earth."

Some years ago, while teaching at Brandon University and living in southwestern Manitoba, Brandt tried attending a Mennonite church there in hopes of rebuilding some connection with her heritage. She wanted to "make peace with it," and she was warmly welcomed by the people there. "That was very tender for me," she says. But over time, she learned people in the church expected her to repent of her writing. "I couldn't do that. My writing has my heart and my soul and my love in it."

Brandt suggests we need to figure out how to have good dialogue between the modern and traditional, "as is happening in many other communities, such as for example, First Nations in Canada and elsewhere." She calls for "habits of respect" that celebrate writers for their hard work and creative vision. She calls for the development of intelligent responses to Mennonite writing as constructive alternatives to shunning and vilification.

Brandt chose to leave the church, but she says people like her should be able to speak their truth without needing to leave, face vilification or repent. ⁂

questions i asked my mother

by di brandt

look when grampa died last week everybody said he's better off where he is because he's in heaven now he's with God we should be happy he's gone home but yesterday when they put him in the ground the minister said he's going to be there till the last trumpet raises the quick & the dead for the final judgement now look mom i can't figure out which is true it's got to be either up or down i mean what's he gonna do swoop back into his body at the last moment so he can rise with the trumpet call or what i got to know mom what do you think my mother is sewing she's incredibly nimble with her fingers my father marvels at them she's sewed all our clothes since we were born embroidered designed them she bites the thread carefully before answering now Diana she says & then stops i can see my question is too much for her Dad she calls into the other room come here a minute & listen to what this girl is asking i have to repeat the whole thing my voice rising desperately well when grampa died last week everybody said he's better off where he is because he's in heaven now he's with God but yesterday when they put him in the ground the minister said he's going to be there till the last trumpet raises the quick & the dead for the final judgement & i can't figure out which is true he's got to be either up or down what's he gonna do swoop back into his body at the last moment so he can rise with the trumpet call or what they look at each other complicity in their eyes i don't think that's a very nice thing to say about grampa she begins she wouldn't say this if we were alone it's an introduction she lets him finish with the big stuff it's your attitude he says i've noticed lately everything you say has this questioning tone i don't think you're really interested in grampa or your faith what you really want is to make trouble for mom & me you've always been like that you're always trying to figure everything out your own way instead of submitting quietly to the teachings of the church when are you going to learn not everything has to make sense your brain is not the most important thing in the world what counts is your attitude & your faith your willingness to accept the mystery of God's ways another time i asked her mom i been thinking about

arithmetic & what i'm wondering is do you think arithmetic was
invented or discovered i mean it seems like it must have been
invented because all these signs numbers & things they didn't find
those lying on a rock somewhere people must have made them
up but on the other hand it really works i mean do you think
anybody could have invented 10 times 10 is a hundred & if so
who could it have been well i just don't know she says
wonderingly i've never really thought about it you sure come up
with the strangest questions really i don't know how you got to be
so smart sometimes i just felt i would burst with all the
unanswered questions inside me i thought of writing the *Country
Guide* question & answer column but i didn't have stationery &
anyway no one ever asked questions like that i imagined
heaven as a huge schoolroom where all the questions of the
universe were answered once & for all God was the cosmic school
inspector pointing eternally to a chalkboard as big as the sky
just imagine i thought Abraham & Isaac & all those guys they
already know everything they knew about relativity centuries before
Einstein instantly like that they don't ever have to think one
time i asked her about bread i loved smelling the brown yeast
in the huge blue speckled bowl its sweetish ferment watching it
bubble & churn how does it turn into bread i asked her well
the yeast is what makes it rise she said when you add warm water
it grows as you can see yes but how does it turn into bread i
mean it comes out a completely different thing what exactly
happens to it in there in the oven why does heat turn it into
something full of holes we can eat she sighed my mother
sighed a lot when i was around you're asking me something
i can't tell you she said now help me punch down the dough
i sat in front of the oven all afternoon bathed in warm kitchen
smells trying to figure it out someday i said to myself someday
i will find out i will find out everything

Humans and Humus

A cycle of practical love

By Miles Wiederkehr

My memories of high school are largely a featureless blur—I *did* graduate 40 years ago—but one incident that stands out in detail is a lecture in my vocational agriculture class. Mr. Upp drew an illustration of nutrient cycling on the chalkboard, complete with stick-figure cows. His point was that the talk of organic agriculture relying on animal manure and nitrogen fixation by legumes could not work because farming produces food to sell off the farm and selling food means selling nutrients.

Without replacing the nutrients, soil would become depleted and food production would decrease rapidly. Farming that produces outputs requires inputs.

I found the point both compelling and troubling. I spent many of the intervening 40 years working in food production, with a perpetually troubled idealism. The ideal was to feed people by working as a steward of Creation, but I often saw that we substituted smaller goals and justified wrong means. The result has been to harm Creation, which will make it harder for people to continue to eat.

For the past 12 years, our family has practiced small-scale, somewhat localized farming on 100 acres near Mildmay, Ontario. But in these last few years, my mind has been changing (or is it just clarifying?).

Farming the way we have is certainly not sustainable, and it is not the "best we can do," as some people might suggest. I am coming to realize that all farming, big or small, conventional or organic (or regenerative), is dependent on mined resources, because it produces food which leaves its system.

What we need are not little changes but to actually change models and stop producing food to sell. This belief has put our family into the middle of a big change.

PHOTO BY ANDRE WIEDERKEHR

Supper at the Wiederkehrs. All ingredients are home grown, except the salt.

Linear vs. cyclical

A linear system uses up resources, such as fertilizers and fuels mined far away, and produces waste. In a system that cycles, we take nothing that we do not return. Produce stays on the farm and outside inputs are not used. The two systems are qualitatively different. We can't say that something is "more sustainable"; it either is or it is not.

Mr. Upp was right in that our current food system is unimaginable if we don't use mined resources. However, I would now disagree with his conclusion that we must keep using them.

If we can't keep using mined resources, what can a sustainable food system look like? This question is not just for farmers. Since we all eat, this is for all of us.

First, we need to be clear that nutrients must cycle. In nature, nutrients tend to cycle in place. Trees produce leaves that become soil that feeds the trees. This natural cycling pattern also happens to some extent on farms. Traditionally, and in some cases still today, we actively cycle nutrients (feed) from the fields to livestock and back to the fields (as manure). However, this involves a lot of carrying (energy). Now that many livestock farms are separated from crop production, the carrying costs too much, and manure becomes a problematic waste. Where humans are separated from their food production, the same problem occurs—our manure becomes waste and the cycle gets broken.

Second, the energy used by our food system cannot rely on mined resources. In our family, we are taking first steps to use the strength of our bodies instead of fossil fuels or other linear options.

We have a new appreciation for the real energy cost of things. We can bike to church, but it costs us two to three hours, plus energy and risk. We can heat with wood, but since we saw and split wood by hand, each degree of warmth costs us. Experiencing in our bodies the cost of things changes what is practical or desirable. It also increases the awareness that if we don't experience the cost in our bodies, the cost does not go away. Someone, somewhere, sometime always pays.

This has led us to conclude that our food system must be truly local in the sense that we can bear the carrying costs to cycle nutrients, without externalizing those costs by, for example, using fossil fuels.

Living an alternative

For many years, when we said that we grow a lot of our own food, we meant that we grow some of our own vegetables. We were suffering from what we came to call "staple blindness." We hadn't considered the carbohydrates and proteins that make up the core of our diet.

We are now experimenting with different foods to meet our carbohydrate needs. Using human energy, we have found grains like spelt, wheat and rye to be possible, but more demanding than corn and potatoes in terms of tillage, harvest and processing. Both grains and corn are easier to store long-term than potatoes, which also have more potential for catastrophic late blight. Other root vegetables, as well as squash and amaranth, also help meet our carbohydrate needs.

Bearing the true cost of growing grain makes us realize how expensive grain-based animal protein is. The cost includes the labour (energy cost), and also a consideration of how much land area is justly ours to use. Pigs and chickens eat the same kinds of things we do. Although they can also use feeds we won't, we have always fed them some feed which we could eat.

Ruminants, such as cows, sheep and goats, can digest things we cannot—grass and other forages—but providing them feed in winter and carrying out their manure requires much work. They also produce methane, a greenhouse gas. Given all that, we are still debating the role of animal protein.

Legumes already meet a large part of our protein needs. Dry peas and beans are most important. Soys are well adapted and protein-rich, but not as enjoyable to eat. Runner beans and grass peas show promise here. We have also tried favas, lentils, cowpeas, chickpeas, peanuts, limas, adzuki beans, sweet lupin and tepary beans. While they can be grown, they don't seem as well adapted to our climate.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE WIEDERKEHR FAMILY

Cascade Ruby-Gold Flint corn with corn sheller.

At this point, we are using about 1.5 acres for our family's plant-based needs, which make up most of our diet. We are also working on animal products, fats, oilseeds, sources of sugar, spices, herbs and vitamins. We are not sure what land area we will need for fiber, fuel and building materials as we seek to be sustainable in those areas.

Humanure

The less honoured part of a closed cycle system is our excrement, which we refer to as humanure. Most people in our culture are accustomed to flushing human "waste" away without a thought. Our family uses a simple bucket system with high-carbon cover material to gather humanure. We use a simple composting system to treat it.

Is it safe? Managed composting allows the pile to reach temperatures high enough to kill pathogens (145°F last week). Aging the compost and applying it at an appropriate point in our crop rotation provides an additional safeguard.

Is it distasteful? The user experience for a bucket toilet is quite similar to a flush toilet. Still, we do have buckets of humanure to handle. This is not glorious, but necessary, work: humbly helping humanure become humus. And it is not unfamiliar to anyone who has changed a baby's diaper. It is good human work if done in love.

In all of this, what is the Christian element? Why should this be in *Canadian Mennonite*? We North Americans are using up the world in order to live in it, and requiring others to pay the cost of our needs and wants. We tell ourselves we have no choice. However, we followers of Jesus have made a choice, which we have only to live out. We have chosen to have the same mind that was in Christ Jesus. We have chosen not to grasp the privilege which could be ours, but to redeem Creation by voluntarily accepting hardship and suffering for the sake of love.

A common response to this difficult ideal is that no one can or will do it, and that it will make no difference unless everyone does. So who goes first? I think that, as Christians, we can.

Miles Wiederkehr, along with his wife, Ruth, and sons Theo and Andre, write for Canadian Mennonite *every second month. They can be reached at rumithan@gmail.com.*

To read Andre Wiederkehr's accompanying article about biking his food 90 kilometres to university for a year, see canadianmennonite.org/humans-humus.

Single Moms' Camp brings golden healing

Kintsugi at Hidden Acres Camp

By A.S. Compton

"It's so hard to explain something that feels so sacred to you," Amanda Pot said when asked to describe Single Moms' Camp at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp in New Hamburg, Ontario. Pot has been running the camp for over a decade. "[It's] absolutely exhausting," she said, "but I wouldn't trade it for anything."

Single Moms' Camp has been part of Hidden Acres for over 40 years. Low-income single moms and their children are selected through key partnerships with various organizations in the Waterloo Region and beyond. The kids attending camp are ages 5 to 12. They have a regular camp experience, sleeping in cabins, canoeing, swimming, singing and learning about God's love.

The moms each stay in their own room and experience plenty of "moms only" time. Staff strive to make the moms feel their own self worth and dignity. The camp includes a mom spa, a coffee house evening with decadent desserts and handmade drinks, and a shopping trip to the local Mennonite Central Committee thrift store.

The "Moms' Focus" time is also central. It includes music, discussions and a craft. Pot says the "majority of women who come to this camp have some level of trauma," so she regards Moms' Focus as time to create a safe, welcoming space. "They come feeling so much, and we want them to know when they leave that they have a sense of belonging, and they are worthy of that belonging."

Each year, Pot plans a different craft for Moms' Focus. While Pot holds the belief that everyone has creativity in them, each year a few moms walk away from the craft before it's finished, or choose not to participate at all. This year was different.

The craft was Kintsugi, which means "golden joinery" in Japanese. Kintsugi is the art of repair, practiced by piecing together broken pottery with gold or sliver in the glue. Pottery is made whole, with its brokenness a highlighted part of its history.

PHOTOS BY AMANDA POT

The activity is meant as a reflection on oneself, into places that have been healed or need healing, and the acceptance of that process as a beautiful part of who a person is. While Pot planned and prepared, there were "many things along the way that pointed to God." She says: "I can't really explain it, but I think that God sees and directs, and is in all planning."

While sourcing pottery bowls, Pot connected with a local potter who was also a single mom. Pot explained the camp and the craft. Then she asked permission to break the bowls she would purchase. The potter delightedly told her, "I want you to break my bowls." She also reduced the price.

During a prayerful labyrinth walk that Pot did in the time before the camp, Pot had received the phrase "don't rush." This phrase came back to her when she did a trial run of the Kintsugi craft that turned out to be "disastrous." After breaking the bowl, she immediately began gluing it back together. The pieces wouldn't stay together; the glue refused to hold. The words "don't rush," echoing in her mind, only made the experience more infuriating. Cursing with frustration, she decided she needed to take a break, and as she left the table where she had been working, the cloth under her bowl caught, sending everything flying and shattering into double the number of pieces.

It felt prophetic. Pot wept for the women she was preparing for. "It's like these moms, who think their lives are coming together and they fall apart again," she reflected.

After stepping back for some time to process, Pot realized she had rushed because she didn't want to think about the cracks. "We want to skip to the end," she said, "to wholeness and beauty."

She had prepared the materials for the activity, but she had not prepared herself. Pot returned to her trial bowl. She slowed down, prayed, used a different glue and prepared herself. Even with double the pieces, it took far less time to reassemble the bowl.

When Pot offered the craft to the women at camp, "it was peaceful and sacred," she said. Each woman addressed their craft individually, taking their own time, and in the end, loving the process as well as the result. Pot explained that "gold is to enhance or highlight the cracks," not to

cover them up.

She had left a few small holes in her own bowl, and when showing the moms at camp, one woman said, "look, that's where the light comes in."

"I love that they were doing this activity together," said Pot. "They can see they are not alone in this, and that we all have cracks, and we all need to be put back together. The hardest thing can be to come to terms with that it takes time, and we can't rush it."

One woman sat for a good half hour with her unbroken bowl. Pot asked her why she waited so long, and she answered, "I'm just so tired of being broken." Then she broke it. Don't rush.

Unlike crafts other years, every woman participated.

Camp is an incredible experience each year, says Pot, but this year was special. The moms were "like sponges," she said, "they couldn't wait to hear what [was] next." They were determined to find healing, to be better and to see their kids benefit from it.

Pot said her takeaway from this year is a deeper understanding that "God sees every single person, always, always. . . . The world is so overwhelming and crappy, but we are seen and held."

A.S. Compton lives in Waterloo, Ontario, and serves as part of the Canadian Mennonite *staff.*

Staff changes

Steven Giugovaz

Steven Giugovaz resigned from his role as church engagement minister of Mennonite Church Alberta, concluding his work in July. Giugovaz had served in the role since September 2021. He and his family have moved to Ontario, where they are closer to their extended family. Giugovaz is seeking a new ministry role in the Mennonite church. "My time serving as the church engagement minister has been a gift like none other," he wrote in a July edition of The MCA Communiqué e-newsletter. "Though my time in this position has been shorter than anticipated, it has been an absolute honour to serve you all." Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, executive minister of MC Alberta, expressed his gratitude for Giugovaz's work: "We will miss his contribution to our [MC Alberta] faith community."

Lee Hiebert

In July, Lee Hiebert resigned as lead pastor at Steinbach Mennonite Church in southern Manitoba. He served in the role for six years. Hiebert was previously the associate pastor at Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.

Erin Morash

Erin Morash resigned from her role as pastor of Prairie Mennonite Fellowship in southern Manitoba, ending her ministry there on July 30. Morash previously served in pastoral roles at Langley Mennonite Fellowship in B.C., and North Kildonan Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. In 2006, she started a shared pastoral ministry position at Trinity Mennonite Fellowship in Mather, Manitoba, and Crystal City Mennonite Church, which was 20 km away. Those churches amalgamated in 2020 to become Prairie Mennonite. Morash decided to leave Prairie Mennonite so that she could move closer to family. She has started a new role as a program associate at Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba.

Kevin Derksen

Kevin Derksen resigned from his positions as a pastor at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church in Ontario and as regional ministry associate with Mennonite Church Eastern Canada to serve as lead pastor at Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. Dersken started working at the church on August 1. With Derksen's arrival, Kathy Koop completed her term as interim lead pastor at Bethel. Al Rempel, of MC Eastern Canada, said the regional church will miss Derksen for "his listening posture and careful counsel for his ministry colleagues."

Don Rempel Boschman

Don Rempel Boschman resigned as senior pastor at Douglas Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, effective August 31. The church held a farewell event for Rempel Boschman on September 10, recognizing his 26 years at the church. "I am very grateful to God for the opportunity to pastor in one place for such a long time and see how God shapes people over the long haul," he said. "It was especially meaningful to experience multiple generations of the same families following Christ." Rempel Boschman has started a new job as a spiritual care practitioner at Winnipeg's Misericordia Health Centre.

John Reimer

John Reimer is completing a two-year contract as operations director at Mennonite Church Eastern Canada. His last day is Oct. 15. As a member of the executive leadership team, Reimer provided leadership in general operations, initiated new systems and processes in human resources, provided tech support and worked alongside the finance department. He also served as acting executive minister from October 2021 to January 2022. "John ... helped staff through the pandemic, demonstrating a high care for people, strong thinking, humility and a wonderful sense of humour," according to the regional church's weekly e-newsletter. "For all these things, we are truly grateful." Over his career, Reimer has worked in management with cause-related or faith-based organizations. These include Ten Thousand Villages in Petitcodiac, New Brunswick; MCC Thrift and Gift in Elmira, Ontario; and PeaceWorks Computer Consulting Inc. in Waterloo. His immediate plans after finishing his time at MC Eastern Canada are to take "time for discernment and reflection," he said.

Six stories of women's ordination in the '70s, '80s and '90s

By John A. Esau, Nancy Kauffmann and Karen Martens Zimmerly

Esther Patkau

In the 1950s, Mennonite churches in Canada had the practice of ordaining missionaries. What church leaders could not imagine at home seemed acceptable for women who would be sent far away. Esther Patkau, ordained as a missionary in 1951, returned to Canada as a seasoned pastor from Japan. In 1976, she began serving as associate pastor at First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon, where the early years of ministry were challenging, as many congregants were not comfortable having a woman pastor.

Doris Weber

Doris Weber grew up in the Western Ontario Mennonite Conference, which had Amish roots. When she was a child in the 1930s and 1940s, her parents took the family to many musical events in churches beyond the Mennonite fold. In one congregation the female pastor of the church introduced the musicians. The next morning, Weber asked her mother if she thought she might be able to be a pastor someday. Her mother did not think so, but Weber never let go of that possibility.

After her sixth child began school, Weber returned to school to receive her Bachelor of Arts and Master of Divinity degrees. During these years she began pastoral ministry with her husband, Rod, at Avon Mennonite Church in Stratford, Ontario, in the early 1970s. Rod received the original invitation but insisted that Doris be included in the pastoral call. Her ministry was built on a strong foundation of God's love and welcoming arms for the people she served. Preaching and pastoral care became opportunities to practice listening and loving. Bringing a woman's perspective opened a broader way to understand God and to address concerns that specifically impacted women. Co-pastoring with a spouse meant navigating differences in gender, differences in style, and the risk of ministry taking over family time. At times, co-pastoring led to comparisons that created stress in the marriage.

On March 8, 1979, Doris and Rod were both commissioned at Avon Mennonite Church. The conference minister was supportive of women in ministry, and in an era when ordination was downplayed, he thought commissioning would be more acceptable to the congregation. A short time after the commissioning, the commissioning document was replaced by an ordination certificate from the conference.

Doris Weber would go on to pastor numerous congregations on her own.

Martha Smith Good

Martha Smith Good studied at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in the early 1970s, when female students were finding their voice as leaders in gatherings outside the classroom. By the time she came to Guelph Mennonite Church in Guelph, Ontario, she had already served in several Mennonite congregations in Canada and the United States. Smith Good was well acquainted with the joy and sacred trust of being a pastor. She had also experienced church structures and male colleagues that assumed male power and leadership. When an all-male elder board expected her to serve the snacks, she gently declined and stated that the one who brought the snacks should serve them.

The struggle for ordination was painful. Initially the conference denied the request of Smith Good's congregation, without giving clear reasons. Smith Good persisted and asked to meet with the conference personnel committee. The chair, who was the only woman on the committee, abdicated her role and invited Smith Good to lead the meeting. When Smith Good asked for transparency regarding their decision, she was met with silence.

She courageously named that they had not spoken to her directly about an earlier

Esther Patkau

Doris Weber

Martha Smith Good

Ruth Boehm


April Yamasaki

experience of stress in ministry and made assumptions leading to the ordination denial. Since she met the qualifications of the current ordination guidelines, Smith Good let them know she expected to hear from them shortly for an ordination interview and then left.

In April 1982, she became the first woman ordained in the Mennonite Conference of Ontario and Quebec. In joyful worship and celebration with the congregation and her family, she was able to offer forgiveness for what had taken place earlier.

Ruth Boehm

Ruth Boehm began serving in 1989 as youth pastor at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 25. She was a second-generation woman in ministry, as she had experienced vibrant female pastoral leadership and mentoring in Ontario, where she grew up. She received good support from her male colleagues. She also sensed she had better not "screw up," since this would reflect on the senior pastor and the risks he was taking with this issue.

Boehm delayed to her second term the ordination process that Bethel had established for its ministers. The ordination committee was assembled and invited the conference into the process. The committee was extremely careful and clear that this was a church issue and not a personal issue, knowing there was some opposition to having a female pastor. Some of those most opposed were women who had experienced significant leadership in informal roles.

The committee recommended to church leadership that Boehm be ordained based on the thorough process of discernment that had taken place rather than a vote. Boehm and a large gathering, including family and many congregations, celebrated her ordination on November 1, 1992.

April Yamasaki

In 1993, April Yamasaki attended Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Clearbrook, British Columbia, while teaching at the nearby Mennonite Bible college and writing and publishing materials on Christian living. When the pastor left suddenly, Yamasaki was asked to plan and lead four Advent worship services. After the first service, a woman asked, "How would you like to be the pastor of this church?" Yamasaki laughed it off, but she continued to be asked the same question by others, and finally the chair of the search committee called. The congregation had already done some good biblical study on the role of women in the church, and so they were ready to consider calling a woman.

God took Yamasaki from no thoughts about pastoral ministry to reluctantly meeting with the search committee to curiosity and finally to excitement. The initial call was for an interim period, but within that first year she was invited to become the lead pastor. The conference was ready to move forward with ordination. Yamasaki, however, was still getting used to the idea of being a pastor. She was aware that the wider church was adopting a two-year licensing process and suggested they follow that path. With ordination, she was saying, "I've tested it, I've explored it, and I understand it now as an ongoing ministry for me."

On October 27, 1996, she was the first woman ordained to pastoral ministry in the Conference of Mennonites in British Columbia.

Magdalena Widjaja

Grace Mennonite Church in Regina, Saskatchewan, established Chinese and Laotian fellowships in 1988 within the congregation as a result of sponsoring refugees. Magdalena Widjaja, an Alliance-trained pastor, became the second pastor of the congregation's Chinese fellowship. She came from a large evangelical Indonesian congregation with understandings of the pastor being in charge. She had many adjustments to becoming a Mennonite pastor in the Canadian context. The fellowship was small, and the majority of attenders were Chinese university exchange students navigating a new culture, who would leave after four years of study.

Accepting that decisions were shared with congregational leaders was new to Widjaja, but she learned to appreciate this support and accountability during challenging times of ministry. She was ordained in 1997.

Conclusion

Though there were few Mennonite women in pastorates in the 1970s, by 1985 there were 12 women serving across the conferences that would eventually form Mennonite Church Canada. By 1990, there were 20 women, and by 2000 the number had doubled to 40. By 2006, there were 72 women on the ministerial registry list.

This article is adapted from the chapter, "The great hurdle: Women are ordained," in Proclaiming the Good News: Mennonite Women's Voices, 1972–2006, *edited by Lois Y. Barrett and Dorothy Nickel Friesen (Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2023). Reprinted with permission.*

Bledsoe joins Edmonton First Mennonite

By Emily Summach
Alberta Correspondent

Debbie Bledsoe began her role as a co-pastor at First Mennonite Church in Edmonton on August 23. Bledsoe, who is a recent graduate of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, describes her journey to pastoral calling as wrestling with God.

When she was part of Raleigh Mennonite Church in Raleigh, North Carolina, her pastor said to her, "Everyone else can see you're supposed to be a pastor; everyone else can tell. Why don't you apply to seminary?"

Bledsoe dismissed the idea for as long as she could. "Finally, God wouldn't leave me alone," said Bledsoe, "and I said, 'I'll do it.'"

Bledsoe interned at Seattle Mennonite Church and felt a desire to serve in an urban congregation in a more northern region. She submitted her application to First Mennonite Church and found her candidating experience to be "affirming and incredible." Bledsoe, along with her wife Emily, moved to Edmonton. "I was certain everyone else was wrong about my calling, but here I am living the absolute dream," she said.

Debbie Bledsoe

News shorts

German book ministry to close

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada plans to close two bookstores connected with *Die Mennonitische Post* in Steinbach and Winkler, Manitoba, at the end of March 2024. Since the 1980s, MCC Canada has been promoting literacy and learning in Low German-speaking communities, publishing a popular German newspaper and selling German books. Changes in book sales have made the present model unsustainable, and today there are more options for accessing books. *Die Mennonitische Post* newspaper and *Das Blatt* magazine for children will continue.

Mennonite insurance company closes

A Kansas court mandated the liquidation of MAX Insurance in August, initiating a process similar to bankruptcy. Created in 2001, MAX brought together 11 American mutual aid organizations. A sharp increase in claims due to storm damage in recent years contributed to its end.

MAX Canada, which was created out of the former Mennonite Aid Union, joined MAX in 2007. It was purchased by Chelsea Avondale in 2016.

Mennonite Aid Union had been an informal and volunteer-driven organization with very low premiums, but many policyholders left as prices rose.

B.C. school names acting president

Columbia Bible College, the Abbotsford, B.C., school operated jointly by Mennonite Church B.C. and the B.C Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, has appointed Derek Rogusky as the new acting president. Bryan Born resigned from the role earlier.

Rogusky previously served as chief financial officer for the school. He will serve as acting president until July 31, 2024, or until a new president is confirmed.

MCC takes day off for Indigenous learning

Mennonite Central Committee Ontario will recognize the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on Monday, Sept. 25. All offices and thrift shops will be closed and staff will spend this day in learning activities related to Indigenous people.

Promotional Supplement

Schools Directory

RJC stakes its claim on Anabaptist identity

School welcomes largest group of students in 15 years

By Emily Summach
Saskatchewan Correspondent

Four years ago, things were looking dire for RJC High School in Rosthern, Saskatchewan. Enrollment was the lowest ever, at 65 students. It had been slowly declining for 20 years, according to Ryan Wood. Wood, who served as principal previously, is now president and CEO of RJC. "We knew that we couldn't lose another 20 students," he said, "We needed to grow year after year to be sustainable."

The school surveyed parents, churches and alumni. Why weren't they sending students to RJC? The common responses were that RJC cost too much and that people didn't really know what RJC was about.

Swift changes were made. Tuition fees were cut in half. Money was funneled into advertising campaigns and social media. The school changed its name from Rosthern Junior College to RJC High School. The leadership chose a position of radical welcome to all who wanted to be a part of the community.

"We realized we weren't clearly answering those basic questions for students," said Wood. So the school said, "you're welcome here." They also embraced an identity as "a Mennonite School for the World."

PHOTO SUPPLIED BY RJC HIGH SCHOOL:

Ryan Wood (left), president and CEO of RJC High School, and David Epp, principal.

Through this rebranding, restructuring and doubling down on their Anabaptist identity, a remarkable turnaround has occurred. The school welcomed 104 students in September, the largest student population in over 15 years.

David Epp, principal of RJC, describes the feeling on campus as vibrant and energetic. Half the student body live in the school's residence. Leadership is proud that enrollment has climbed while still being faithful to the school's Mennonite roots. "The simplest way to describe it is that we are unabashedly Anabaptist and radically inclusive. We want to offer an education that is built on faith, service and peacemaking. And we're seeing that that's relevant and resonant to our students," said Epp.

One unique feature the school offers is grade-based service projects at local organizations and organizations in other provinces. Students are encouraged to take seriously the call of Jesus to be of service to the world, said Epp.

The board of the school also changed the administrative structure. Since RJC is one of five Historical High Schools, according to provincial law, it operates as a school division with a single school. That means Wood, when he was principal, was responsible for reporting to and liaising with the education ministry, in addition to regular principal duties and strategic planning.

The size of the portfolio was too large, according to David Weiler-Thiessen, RJC's board chair. "[Wood] was trying to fill all the roles. . . . it was just too much." This summer, the board announced that Wood would transition to the role of president and CEO, and David Epp would assume the role of principal.

Wood says all these changes, and the charting of new territory, feels good. He's upbeat about the future. "I'm very grateful and honored to be entrusted with this role, blessed to be surrounded by such good people. I feel really hopeful and positive about the future. Lots of people have bet against the church, and that's a bad bet. We have to be faithful to what's in front of us now. It'll look different than it did in the past, but it will be alright. It's a good thing."

Holy Land pilgrimage planned for May

Byron Rempel-Burkholder
MC Canada Palestine-Israel Network

Mennonite Church Canada's Palestine-Israel Network is inviting people to join its Palestine-Israel tour, scheduled for May 11-26, 2024.

If you're passionate about peace wedded to justice, biblical perspectives on the land many call "holy" and the thriving of the global church, this may be the opportunity of a lifetime.

You will see key biblical sites and meet the "living stones" of the Palestinian Christian community. You can also take part in a biennial conference focused on peace and justice in the Middle East context.

This tour, organized through Bethlehem Bible College and MC Canada's Palestine-Israel Network, provides opportunities for reflection, discussion and meaningful follow-up.

Space is limited. Registration deadline is Oct. 15. Visit mennonitechurch.ca/pin/pilgrimage for details.

PHOTO BY MELITA REMPEL-BURKHOLDER

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

Nov. 14-18: Mennonite Heritage Museum Christmas Market. More details to come.

Nov. 25: MHSBC presents: "Holodomor Remembrance: Voices of Survivors." Doors open at 2:30 pm; Film/Presentations at 3 p.m.; Faspa at 4 p.m. For tickets call: 604-853-6177 or go to www.mhsbc.com.

Saskatchewan

Oct. 19-20: Called to be a Worship Leader, Nutana Park Mennonite Church, Saskatoon. (19th) Called to be a worship leader: Exploring the role, 7-9 p.m. (20th) Leading in Worship: Exploring pathways and pitfalls in congregations, 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information and to register, go to: mcsask.ca/event/11422.

Manitoba

Oct. 28, 29: Canadian Foodgrains Bank's "Singin' in the Grain" fundraising concerts, featuring the Steinbach Regional Secondary School and Westgate Collegiate: Douglas Mennonite Church, Winnipeg on October 28, 7 p.m. and at Emmanuel Mennonite Church on October 29, 3 p.m.

Nov. 5: The Mennonite Community Orchestra presents "The Power of Hope" featuring a tribute to Ukraine and the premiere of Rains Song by CMU student Liam Berry. See www.mennonitecommunityorchestra for more concert information.

Nov. 8: Dual Hybrid Book Launch. Join host Sue Sorensen and authors Ariel Gordon ("Sightseeing") and Mitchell Toews ("Pinching Zwieback"), both creators with Winnipeg's At Bay Press, 7 p.m. in the atrium at McNally Robinson Booksellers, Grant Park, Winnipeg. Info: bit.ly/GordonToewsLAUNCH.

Ontario

Sept. 30: Urban Anabaptist Church Planters Workshop, "Tentmakers: Opportunities and Challenges for Developing Congregations" at the Ottawa Mennonite Church, 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.

Oct. 5: Celebrate the launch of Professor Emeritus Marlene Epp's new book *Eating like a Mennonite*, exploring the meaning of Mennonite foodways, around the table and around the world. From zwieback to tamales and from sauerkraut to spring rolls, *Eating Like a Mennonite* reveals food

as a complex ingredient in ethnic, religious, and personal identities, with the ability to create both bonds and boundaries between people. Books will be available to purchase. Reception to follow. More information at uwaterloo.ca/grebel/events/book-launch-eating-mennonite.

Oct. 11: Conrad Grebel University College's 60th Anniversary Gala Dinner at 6 p.m., hosted by Eric Friesen. With stories we'll recreate memories of Community Supper and raise money for residence facility projects. We will also get a glimpse into the University of Waterloo's future as UWaterloo President Vivek Goel speaks about "Waterloo at 100." Purchase tickets at: uwaterloo.ca/grebel/events/60th-gala-dinner.

Oct. 12 and 15: Ted & Co present *We Own This Now*, a drama by Alison Casella Brookins that looks at love of land, loss of land and what it means to "own' something. Learn how the Doctrine of Discovery is still being used and causing harm today. October 12, 7 p.m. at Steinmann Mennonite Church. October 15, 7 p.m. at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate. Tickets online at: mcco.ca/we-own-this-now.

Oct. 21: MCEC Youth Event at UMEI, 1-5 p.m. at UMEI Christian High School in Leamington, Ont.

Oct. 21-22: Toronto United Mennonite Church has been in ministry for 75 years.Come celebrate with us. (21) Anniversary Dinner with historical presentation 6.30-9 p.m., (22) Service of thanksgiving (in person or online) at 11 a.m. Followed by Heritage Potluck (foods from our many cultural backgrounds) and Birthday Party, with Freiwillige (open mic) storytelling, displays, games and activities. Please contact secretary@tumc.ca for more information.

Oct. 24: TMTC Closing Ceremony: Celebrating the Legacy of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre. Gather with those associated with TMTC past and present, celebrate legacy, and share stories as the Centre comes to a close during this virtual event. Hosted by Jeremy Bergen, the event will feature brief reflections by some of those who cared for and benefited from TMTC over the years. There will also be an opportunity for brief sharing during an open mic time. Register at: uwaterloo.ca/grebel/events/tmtc-closing-ceremony.

Oct. 28: Voices Together Resource Day, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at Shantz Mennonite Church, in Baden, Ont., with hymn sing at 7 p.m.

Oct. 27-29: Fall work weekend at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp. For more information, go to www.slmc.ca/retreats.

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

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

Upcoming Advertising Dates

Issue Date	Ads Due
Oct. 6 *Focus on Education*	Sept. 25
Oct. 20	Oct. 6
Nov. 3 *Focus on Books & Resources*	Oct. 23
Nov. 17	Nov. 6
Dec. 1	Nov. 20
Dec. 15	Dec. 5
Dec. 29 *Digital Issue*	Dec. 18

Classifieds

Obituary for Doris Stalter Burkholder

Doris Wilma Stalter Burkholder passed away at the age of 95 years and 10 months on October 13, 2022, at Fairview Long Term Care, Fairview, Alberta. Doris was born December 8, 1926, in Gridley, Illinois, USA, to Emma Stauffer Stalter and Simon D. Stalter. She married Paul L. Burkholder on April 27, 1947. Together they opened the Bluesky Mennonite Church (now Bluesky Christian Fellowship) in 1948. She is survived by her 7 children and their spouses: Timothy (Sharon Sitler) Burkholder of Edmonton, Alberta; Owen (Ruth Ann Augsburger) Burkholder of Harrisonburg, Virginia; Luanna (Ruben) Friesen of Riverton, Manitoba; Wyonne (Raymond) Weber of Fairview, Alberta; Nancy (Henry) Friesen of Niverville, Manitoba; Fern (Marcus) Diener of Meridian, Mississippi; and Stanley (Christina Gross) Burkholder of Bluesky, Alberta. Funeral services were held on Saturday, November 12, 2022.

Employment Opportunity

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PHOTO BY AARON EPP

Inspired by the dove symbol on the *Voices Together* hymnal, *CM* staffer Aaron Epp carved this pumpkin in October 2020. If you carve a church-related design into your pumpkin this year, send a photo to submit@canadianmennonite.org and we'll share it on our social media.