Canadian Mennonite
November 3, 2023 Volume 27 Number 22

Gaza
Attending to war

INSIDE

EDITORIAL

Hold tenderly to death

Will Braun
editor@canadianmennonite.org

The day before writing this marked three years since my sister died of cancer. We gathered as a family at her grave to mark the occasion. We talked about the day she died, things that remind us of her and how proud she would be of the two young boys who will always be her sons.

Many of us have these dates on our calendars and in our hearts. Some people's calendars and hearts may be quite full of the dates on which loved ones departed.

As the years pass, commemorations tend to become more subdued, the memories more hidden, the grief more private. This is, in some sense, natural, as is the fact that while memory and grief change over time, the loved ones are never forgotten. Memory is powerful.

While elements of loss are hidden and private, collective recognition is of great value. There is something in us that needs to mark loss in the context of community, to hold it in the presence of others and of God.

The two-part feature in this issue touches on this holy task. In a piece called "As he lay dying," Dora Dueck writes beautifully about the intimate, intense final stages of her husband's life (page 8).

Anyone who has sought to make the final weeks together with a loved one as meaningful as possible—that period when overwhelming sorrow and overwhelming joy can mingle into one—and anyone who has sat at the bed of one who will never again communicate beyond a faint squeeze of a hand, will surely be touched by Dora's warm and honest account.

Of course, sometimes death comes unexpectedly and immediately, creating a very different experience. In any case, death is as intense as it is common.

The second part of the feature is Aaron Epp's piece on Eternity Sunday (page 10). Aaron contacted as many Mennonite Church Canada congregations as he could find email addresses for (167) and found that 81 of them take time during an annual service to commemorate loved ones who have died. Many call it Eternity Sunday and most mark it around this time of year. He writes about the different rituals used and the experiences of those involved.

At one of numerous funerals I have attended in Indigenous communities, a wise person said that each of us in attendance would take a tiny piece of the grieving family's sorrow home with them, making the burden slightly more bearable for the family. In one sense, grief is profoundly private and, in another, it must be shared.

Death is often, though not always, associated with aging and we have two pieces that talk about that. Cathrin van Sintern-Dick talks about proactive mediation processes that can help families prevent conflicts that arise with aging (page 19), and 97-year-old Helmut Lemke discusses his own process of growing old and the adjustments required (page 28).

We also bring you more voices from the Middle East (page 22) as we seek out those Palestinians who have ties to Canadian church folk. As one of the most intractable conflicts on the globe reaches new levels of seeming intractability, I am astounded at those people who rise above hate and enmity despite the venomous atmosphere around them. Thanks be to God.

Plus, a good dose of wisdom, direction and zip from Judith McCartney who is building youth leaders in Toronto (page 20), Shel Boese who is bringing new energy to Mennonite Church B.C. (page 27), César García who is picking church apart from state (page 25) and Kara Carter who is pointing us past the scuff marks on the fellowship hall floor (page 18).

For those interested in good stories, fresh ideas and the feel of a hearty book in your hands, see our fall list of books and resources on page 36.

Finally . . . from the tenderness of death to the liveliness of youth . . . tune in to our November 29 web event to hear what church looks like from the vantage point of young people who have answered the call to pastoral ministry. See the yellow promo piece on page 21.

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ABOUT THE COVER

Palestinians sit amid rubble in the city of Rafah in southern Gaza on October 12, 2023.

PHOTO BY ANAS-MOHAMMED/SHUTTERSTOCK

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Patriotic violence

A full 23 percent of Americans believe that, "because things have gotten so far off track, true American patriots may have to resort to violence in order to save [their] country." The recent poll conducted by the Public Religion Research Institute and the Brookings Institution found that one-third of white evangelical Protestants took this position.

Source: PRRI

Flickr photo by Seattle Municipal Archives

Nuns stay put in northern Gaza

According to an October 20 report, a group of nuns were refusing to leave the only Catholic church in Gaza. The nuns said they will remain with the elderly, disabled and sick people in their care. As of October 24, over 700 Palestinians had taken refuge in the small Holy Family Church, located in Gaza City, just 8 km south of the Israel border.

Source: Vision Christian Media, Vatican News

PHOTO: FACEBOOK/HOLY FAMILY CHURCH, GAZA

50 YEARS AGO

Jordan work suspended due to Mideast war

Akron, Pa. — Mennonite Central Committee work in two refugee camps in Jordan was suspended due to the new outbreak of hostilities in the Middle East. Programs in Jerusalem and Beit Jala, however, continued and teachers in Cairo are reported safe and well.

• • •

"Every week our office windows rattle from Israeli-flown American planes breaking the sound barrier, either doing maneuvers or reconnaissance missions or on their way to another bombing mission," Urbane Peachey wrote in February. "On most visits to the Jordan Valley I hear the activity of aircraft in the distance."

Mennonite Reporter, October 29, 1973

500 years ago (almost)

On October 23, 1544, eccentric Anabaptist preacher Eloy Pruystinck was burned at the stake in Antwerp, Belgium. Pruystinck was one of the most radical of the radical reformers. He said every human has the Holy Spirit, and that Spirit is a person's reasoning powers. Eloy had previously been captured, recanted, was released and continued preaching for another 18 years.

Source: Marginal Mennonite Society

Photo: Painting by Francois Bossuet, public domain

Antwerp

Nicaragua sends 12 priests back to Rome

The government of Nicaragua has released 12 formerly jailed Catholic priests and sent them to Rome. More than 80 people have been arrested after President Daniel Ortega accused the Catholic Church of supporting widespread demonstrations against his government. Once a leftist revolutionary, Ortega's views have shifted over time.

Source: World Religion News, Vatican News

WIKIMEDIA/CANCILLERÍA ECUADOR)

Daniel Ortega

A moment from yesterday

These men visited an alternative service camp in 1942. From left: D.P. Reimer (EMC, Steinbach), Jacob F. Barkman (Holdeman minister, Manitoba), David Schulz (Bergthaler bishop, Manitoba) and George DeFehr (Holdeman minister, Alberta).

During WWII, Schulz supported men applying for conscientious objector status, advocating for those whose applications were denied. When the workload was too much, he tried to resign from the Elders committee, but they did not accept his resignation. The minutes show that between May 1942 and January 1943 he tried to resign four times. Schulz understood that when the church called, it was his responsibility to heed the call.

Text: Conrad Stoesz

Photo: John P. Dyck slide collection

Readers write

Gratitude for foyer discussions

Today I got my COVID booster. Other than a barely perceptible soreness in my arm, I have never experienced side effects from these vaccinations.

When it comes to being pro-vaccine, my wife and I are in the minority on her side of the family. Right now, I am tempted to boast to them. However, aware of my urge to preach, I know I need to cool it.

This is where the conversation in *Canadian Mennonite* has been so helpful! Today I pulled out my saved issues on vital topics of the day. The first was Will Braun's three-part series, "The sweet solace of polarization" (October 2022), which encouraged readers to understand those with different viewpoints.

The second was Jack Suderman's letter ("Readers write," May 24, 2021) noting that tone is just as important as precise words and the clarity of argument—something I need to hear, given my penchant toward lecturing and sarcasm.

The third was a letter by Montreal health care worker, Duncan Schellenberg ("Readers write," June 7, 2021) noting that what helps protect his rights is not protests but "the actions of the majority who are willing to accept vaccines and choose through prayer and reason, to abide by COVID-19 restrictions."

I have been enjoying *Canadian Mennonite* for its church foyer discussions, as I think Will Braun termed it when he became editor. I can still remember the faces, topics and some of the conversations at Blenheim Mennonite Church near New Dundee, Ontario, when I was growing up.

As someone who wants to follow Jesus, these conversations are most helpful. Thank you!

Jim Shantz, Bon Accord, Alberta (Holyrood Mennonite Church, Edmonton)

MAID questions

I commend *Canadian Mennonite* for taking on the sensitive topic of medical assistance in dying (MAID). I listened to the October 25 online event on the topic. Thanks to panelists Rhonda Wiebe and Lisa Heinrichs for raising important issues.

A major concern of the panelists, and many others, is that a significant motivation for MAID is inadequate palliative care.

Effective palliative care is expensive, and MAID is the much less expensive alternative. There is truth to this point, but the fact is that our society cannot afford, or is unwilling to spend, the resources that an adequate palliative care system requires, among all the other demands for expensive health care.

Even if we spent the necessary resources, the ability of existing palliative technologies to relieve extreme suffering in all patients is limited. Certainly, if we had an ideal palliative care system, the need to resort to MAID would be lessened. But we do not, and will not, have that ideal system.

MAID will remain the only avenue for many people to relieve intolerable suffering. It is neither empathetic nor helpful simply to say to them, "Too bad we do not have better palliative care for you."

The panelists raised another important concern—whether MAID devalues the life and dignity of persons with disabilities and other marginalized people. It is vital that the implementation of MAID include safeguards against such impact. But the focus on MAID tends to obscure a deeper aspect of this question.

In our society, matters of life and death have long become technologized. Medical technologies are utilized daily by many of us, especially us older folk, to stave off what in pre-technological society would be a "natural death." With or without MAID, the time and conditions of our death are increasingly determined by someone's decision to implement or discontinue a life-saving technology.

In matters of death and dying we have been "playing God" for a long time.

Nearly all the questions about the just and fair use of MAID apply to the allocation of always-scarce and expensive technologies. A central issue in biomedical ethics is that marginalized people in our society are systematically given less access to life-saving and life-enhancing (including palliative) medical resources. Who is more likely to get the available kidney, heart or liver—the young, vital, clean-living professional, or the cognitively challenged, homeless, poor person? Who will most likely die early as a result?

Conrad G. Brunk, Waterloo, Ontario

Online comments

A reminder from Mr. Zimmerman

The article "Memory carrier" (October 20) brought tears to my eyes. It is impossible to understand all the motivations which cause folks to enlist in a war, and I am reminded of the lyrics of Bob Dylan in "The Times They Are A-Changin'," where he admonishes listeners: "Don't criticize what you can't understand."

As I age, I find I need to regularly remind myself of that truth. I can't possibly know or understand all the nuances that inform someone else's decision, especially one as deeply consequential as going off to war.

Paul Thiessen, Vancouver

Careful, beautiful words

Thank you, Randy ("To remember is to work for peace," October 20), for putting words together in a careful and

beautiful way. You express my heart and sentiments very well. The bombing of an ancient church in Gaza, where hundreds of people were seeking shelter, ought to be enough to convince everyone that holy war is always wrong. Yes, let's speak and act following the way of Jesus, prince of peace.
Jonathan Bornman

New application

Great insight ("To remember is to work for peace," October 20). My wife and I grew up with the story of Zacchaeus and this is a new application for us.
Gary Nesbit

Open to different narratives

I agree entirely with the author ("White Christian nationalism," October 20). I came to the Anabaptist faith later in life, in my 20s, and what compelled me was how we embody and nurture Jesus's way of welcoming and loving everyone—not just certain types of people that fit our narrative. How can you be a Christian and go against Jesus's desire and hope for us? I hope this article will be read and shared numerous times. Thank you!
Corinne Lafontaine

Be in Touch

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

Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Booy—Dylan Eleanor (b. Sept. 16, 2023) to Jason Booy and Daniel Segal, Toronto United Mennonite Church, Toronto, Ont.
Klassen—Meah Ann (b. Aug. 4, 2023) to Megan and Shane Klassen, East Zorra Mennonite Church, Tavistock, Ont.
Paterson—Hazel Jamie (b. Oct. 21, 2023) to Niall and Austin Paterson, Niagara United Mennonite Church, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.
Yantzi—Noah Jay (b. Aug. 19, 2023) to Hannah and Dylan Yantzi, East Zorra Mennonite Church, Tavistock, Ont.

Weddings

Gingerich/Nywening—Mitchell Gingerich (East Zorra Mennonite) and Kim Nywening at West London Alliance Church on Sept. 16, 2023.
Ropp/Law—Rachel Ropp (East Zorra Mennonite) and Philip Law, St. Mary's, Ont., June 23, 2023.
Swartzentruber/Amstutz—Lucas Swartzentruber (East Zorra Mennonite) and Sophia Amstutz (Cassel Mennonite), near Tavistock on Aug. 12, 2023.
Yantzi/Gray—Jesse Yantzi (East Zorra Mennonite) and Marissa Gray, at City Gate Church in Stratford, Ont., on Aug.19, 2023.

Deaths

Bender—Geoline (b. Oct. 16, 1931; d. Aug 13, 2023) East Zorra Mennonite Church, Tavistock, Ont.
Bergen—Helen Irma (Hildebrand, nee Fast), 84, (b. Nov. 15,1939; d. Aug. 30, 2023) Sargent Ave. Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man.
Bergen—Margaret, 95, (b. Jan. 5, 1928; d. Oct. 26, 2023), Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg Man.
Braun—Menno, 91, (b. Dec. 9, 1931; d. Oct. 30, 2023), Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona, Man.
Campbell—David John, 81, (b. June 14, 1942; d. Oct. 14, 2023), Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg Man.
Hildebrand— Herman, 86, (b. Feb. 24, 1937; d. Oct. 15, 2023), First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man.
Nickel—John, 88, (b. Oct. 18, 1935; d. Oct. 24, 2023) Sargent Ave. Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man.
Rempel—Peter, 81, (b. July 12, 1942; d. Oct. 15, 2023), Toronto United Mennonite Church, Toronto, Ont.
Roth—Ruby, 95, (b. May 31, 1928; d. Oct. 20, 2023), Crosshill Mennonite Church, Crosshill, Ont.
Schwartzentruber—Harold (b. Feb. 9, 1936; d. Sept 18, 2023) East Zorra Mennonite Church, Tavistock, Ont.
Scott—Ken, 81, (b. Feb. 20, 1942; d. Oct. 23, 2023), First Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, Sask.
Steinmann—Ervin, 93, (b. Jan. 7, 1930; d. Sept. 28, 2023), Steinmann Mennonite Church, Baden, Ont.
Toews—Mary Louise, 86,(b. Dec. 18, 1936; d. Oct. 6, 2023), First Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, Sask.
Winter—Frank, 99, (b. Sept. 30, 1924; d. Oct. 13, 2023), First Mennonite Church, 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

As he lay dying

By Dora Dueck

In the following excerpts from Return Stroke, *Dora Dueck's book of essays and memoir (CMU Press, 2022), she writes of the final days of her husband's life.*

There were nineteen beds in the hospice, that's what I heard, most of them occupied, but I paid no attention to them. When we first arrived, yes, I'd glanced into the room next to his and saw a tiny woman in the bed, tucked up like a newborn, and the next morning the bed was freshly made and empty. There was a stained-glass butterfly lamp beside the book where we signed in every day because of the Covid, and they put the little memorial cards—like place cards—with the latest names in front of it. There was always one new card, it seemed, sometimes two. But it was true what a character in Brit Bennett's *The Vanishing Half* says about death: "Only the specifics of it hurt. Death, in a general sense, was background noise."

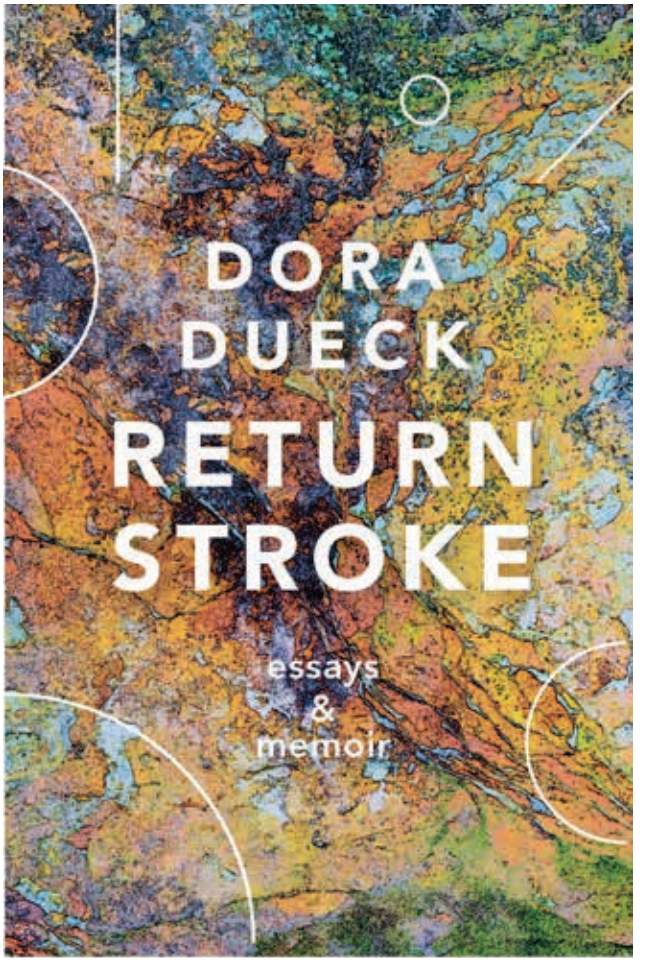
He was the one who mattered, he was the specifics that hurt.

Strictly speaking, he'd been palliative since the time of his diagnosis some two-and-a-half years earlier, of prostate cancer metastasized to his bones. Meaning there was no ultimate cure. But quality of life, some quantity too, was possible, given current advances in cancer mitigation.

The things people said to us about our situation were often doleful, as if they imagined us perpetually sad, but we slept and ate and talked and did our household chores and connected with our children and grandchildren—carefully or virtually during the pandemic—and we read and watched movies or the news. He tended his balcony plants and a garden plot at the apartment complex and kept the bird feeders stocked. He continued to volunteer at Habitat for Humanity and a local thrift shop. Eventually his mobility lessened and independent walking turned into walking with a cane, to walking with a walker, to needing a wheelchair. But the balance between living and dying was weighted on the side of living.

Until it shifted, that is, and to my mind tipped heavily to dying, the mid-October day his pain was so excruciating he couldn't rise from his bed and in the wake of that had to be hospitalized to get it under control. And then we were told that options for "treatment" had finally run out and from now on, back home, it would be strictly management of his pain.

"Well," he said to me, in the wry uncomplaining way he had, "they're not going to bark up a tree where there's no cat."



But even then. Even then, back home with his family doctor and palliative team in charge instead of the oncologist, and hydromorphone doses steadily increasing to confront his suffering, he lived. The seed catalogue in the mail excited him. He loved our Christmas drive to view the lights. He kept doing what he could.

I asked, more than once, "Are you scared?"

And he always said "No."

On one occasion I remarked it didn't seem fair; at sixty-nine, he was too young for this. His eyes filled with tears, as they did so easily those months, and we hugged. He said I smelled good.

"Well," I said, pressing in for another embrace, "smell

me again."

But the diminishments of function continued. "His body's breaking down," our son told me bluntly, gently, when I phoned him in distress about his father's latest bodily humiliation. "Reverting." "I know, I know," I said. The scale had tipped—drastically—toward death. Now I tried to remember our conversations. I tried to remember and record his sentences because all of them seemed last words.

It was an up and down, inhabiting that fraught space of waiting and uncertainty. A rollercoaster, we called it. We knew we were observers in the midst of his dying, but no one could predict for us how long it might take.

We were governed by rules at the hospice because of the pandemic: only two in the room and the same two all day and no overnight, unless the circumstances were exceptional—meaning, unless he was very close to the end. Of his sixteen days in residence, I attended for fourteen; the children took turns accompanying me. I yielded two days to children-in-law so they could spend a day with him as well.

On one of the days I wasn't at the hospice, he asked a nurse to connect us by phone. "Life is upside down," he began. He'd had a bad night. He felt the staff were upset with him, because he'd tried to get out of bed.

"Are you having pain?"

"Not at the moment, but it can come as fast as saying Johnny Appleseed."

Then he said, "I'll have to get out of here."

"You mean out of the hospice?"

"No," he said. "You know I won't be getting out of that."

Oh. I'd skimmed *Final Gifts* by Maggie Callanan: about listening to "nearing death awareness." About listening for what the dying may be trying to communicate. About the message behind the words.

Oh. I told him I wanted to be there but today it was the girls who were coming. I told him I put seeds into the birdfeeder. I told him a hummingbird had stopped by for a drink. I said a prayer and he said thanks and we said goodbye and ended the call, and I thought about his attempted escape and I wailed a little.

I returned home exhausted at the end of each day I spent at the hospice. I was on the tail end of months of being support and carer—done gladly, I'm truly relieved to say in retrospect—and because it had been intense and intimate, I didn't want it to be over yet. But I wanted to be done with it too. For his sake—he'd suffered much—and for mine.

He sent me off with a "go in peace" one evening, and I had supper and settled into a Netflix movie. When the credits rolled, I felt a jarring sensation, for during the entire time of the movie I'd forgotten my dying husband a forty-minute drive away, and it felt something like guilt, but sorrow piled on to it too because now I remembered him and how we used to enjoy going to movies—we preferred the big screen—and we would never do that again, and besides that, the smallest and worst thing of all, his toothbrush was still in the cup in the bathroom and though he would never need it, I couldn't bear to throw it out. And every time I brushed my teeth I saw it and I wanted to back up and beg for a re-do. Not of the suffering, not of the pain, not that, but even to have him well enough to look at his phone and tell me the weather for the day, to make the breakfast porridge, to shuffle behind his walker. I couldn't keep up with this event, I couldn't process it. And besides being at the hospice, the children and I were making cremation arrangements—the hospice office needed to have them decided—and composing his obituary, planning an online service, setting up a memorial site. And my role as chief information officer—so many messages coming in, so many people wondering how he and we were doing—was in overdrive. ("Note to self," I wrote in my journal, "don't ask questions of those in this situation. Questions want to be answered. Just say, 'thinking of you and no need to reply.'")

Most nights I slept well and woke re-energized and eager to get to the only place I wanted to be. At the hospice. In his room. Beside his bed. When I wasn't there, I prayed, and tried to trust he wasn't alone.

"Do you feel God's presence?" I asked.

"Has he ever left?" he said.

There was no fuzzy spiritual radiance in the room; that would be entirely the wrong impression to convey, for those days were far more difficult and mundane than that, but we'd been married forty-six-plus years and he'd been a father for forty-four and the children and I were drawn to him and his approaching death and it held us like a grip, and in spite of our sadness, I think, we sensed the mystery, the strange tenderness of it all, and some kind of glory too was leaking out of his transition away from us. I brought my sketchbook along one day and sketched him sleeping on a page where I'd earlier put down some watercolour as background. Later I realized that, unplanned, his face had landed in a patch of warm yellow, as if bathed by light.

Later, I read Kathryn Mannix's wonderful book *With the End in Mind: Dying, Death, and Wisdom in an Age of Denial*. I'd heard her first on the CBC program, "White Coat, Black Art" with Dr. Brian Goldman, explaining the process of dying, how people get more tired, need to sleep more, how their sleeps get longer and longer, how they may slip into unconsciousness, how their breathing changes, becomes "an automatic reflex cycle." How slow breathing may alternate with regular and steady breathing. How the noisy breathing of the last days doesn't hurt. How it eventually slows and stops. How death is "usually okay"—that is, painless and peaceful.

I could put everything we experienced into the patterns Mannix describes in her book. At least three, maybe four, times we found ourselves holding his hands and speaking or singing or not speaking, but sure it was the end, his breathing slow, lengthy pauses between. And then, as if picking up steam, carrying on again. In the last four or five days he didn't eat or drink, except for that gulp of water. Mostly he slept,

breathing in, breathing out. Breathing out, and in.

Later our daughter showed me a short video she'd taken of him in hospice. The ticking of the clock in the room was loud and obvious on the video. "Ticking away the time," she remarked. But when I'd been in the room, I never heard the clock. The only sound I really heard was his breath. How it grew louder and raspier, how it played with the phlegm building in his throat, how it slowed and seemed to stop. How it continued.

That's how it had been the last Saturday morning too, us thinking "the end," but no, not yet. The day passed. We got supper and ate it beside him in the room.

Should we stay? The nurse on duty couldn't advise us either way. "He's still breathing from his diaphragm," she ventured. So, we might surmise he would last the night. On the two days previous, our sons—not sure their turn in the rotation would come up again—had said their private goodbyes. Now our daughter did the same. We left.

I went to bed early. I had just sunk deeply into sleep when the phone jangled me awake. It was someone from the hospice on the line. My husband had died.

Peacefully, said the nurse who witnessed it.

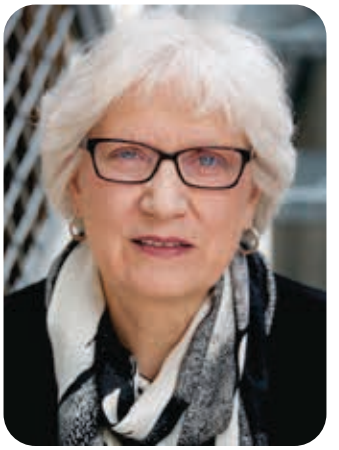
Peacefully, of course. The last breath is an exhale.

This phenomenon—dying when family have left—is also a pattern, Mannix writes. It occurs "with such regularity that we often warn families, especially when the dying process stretches over several days, that it may happen." Is it the presence of people they love that keeps dying persons hanging on? Are they choosing? "We don't know the answers," she says, "but we recognize the pattern."

One of our sons and I drove through the dark—a great kindness, it seemed, that dark—back to the hospice. Back to the familiar room, now utterly quiet. Entering it, I was pierced by the quiet, by the surely impossible absence of the sound of him breathing.

We connected virtually with the other children and together participated in a small ceremony of washing and dressing the body. I'd forgotten a comb so his soft silver hair got fluffed. We had a psalm and a prayer. When we were done, I stayed a while alone in that impossible stillness and heard myself keening, as if I'd tuned into some ancient and continuous high-strung note, desolate as smoke. But then I had to leave his body behind, just as he'd left it behind.

At the far end of the hallway, by the sign-in book and the glowing butterfly lamp, stood a new "in memory of" card. The name on it was his. ⁂



The personal essays in Dora Dueck's Return Stroke*—from which the above is excerpted and adapted—engage with a range of ideas, including motherhood, the ethics of biography, a child's coming-out and the role of imagination within religious faith. Dora Dueck is the author of four books of fiction,* All That Belongs *(2019),* What You Get At Home *(2013),* This Hidden Thing *(2010), and* Under the Still Standing Sun *(1989). She lives in B.C.*

Holy moments in the midst of grief

Churches across Canada dedicate services to remembering the dead

By Aaron Epp
Associate Editor

There's one church service that Fran Giesbrecht makes a special point not to miss: Eternity Sunday.

Observed at his Winnipeg church on the last Sunday before Advent, Eternity Sunday provides opportunity for Giesbrecht and others at Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship to commemorate members of their community who have died.

The church marks Eternity Sunday in various ways. It's typically reflected in the sermon and the children's story. There's a time of remembrance during which congregants can light a candle in memory of a loved one who has died.

A wooden display dubbed "the memory tree," crafted by one of Fort Garry's founding members, hangs on one wall of the sanctuary. The church creates a small bronze nameplate for each person in the congregation who has died in the previous 12 months, and the deceased's family places the nameplate on the tree during the Eternity Sunday service.

Then there's the video that is looped prior to the start of the service. It includes a photo of each of the people from Fort Garry who have died since the church was started in the late 1960s, along with their name.

For Giesbrecht, who joined the church when it was getting started, the video is especially meaningful.

"It's become a holy moment for me because we remember all the saints," he says. "Because of my 53- or 54-year

PHOTO BY AARON EPP

history there, when those credits roll, I'm blessed. I'm deeply blessed with memories and I feel that honouring people who have been our fellow travellers over the years is very special."

Also special for Fran and his wife is the chance to commemorate their daughter-in-law, Jennifer, who died in a car crash in 1994. Remembering Jennifer amid the community that was there for them when their grief was fresh is meaningful to the Giesbrechts.

"There's a long period of time where your feet don't feel the ground, and when your church gathers around you, you're literally carried," Giesbrecht says. "We light a candle for her every time, every service, in her memory. It's an honour."

An adaptation of All Saints' Day—the Western Christian tradition of remembering and celebrating faithful Christians who have died, observed on November 1—Eternity Sunday has its roots in Germany. There, *Totensonntag* (Sunday of the Dead) or *Ewigkeitssonntag* (Eternity Sunday) is a Protestant religious holiday commemorating the faithful departed.

More than a third of Mennonite Church Canada congregations dedicate a service each year to remembering the dead.

Eternity Sunday and Memorial Sunday are the most common names. A couple congregations use Totensonntag and some have given it names like Remembering Sunday and In Memoriam Sunday.

Most churches observe it on the final Sunday of the liturgical year (prior to Advent), while some observe it on the Sunday closest to All Saints' Day or Remembrance Day.

Like at Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, most churches include some element of candle-lighting. Some churches expand their candle lighting to also name other losses, such as the loss of jobs, relationships or good health.

'We don't have to be smiley and happy'

At Toronto United Mennonite Church, Eternity Sunday involves flowers.

At the appointed time in the service,

people wishing to honour a dead loved one are invited to pick up a carnation at the back of the sanctuary, walk to the front, say the person's name into the microphone and then place the flower in the vase.

During the pandemic, the church added a slide show that features photos of the deceased, says Anita Tiessen, who chaired the worship committee from 2014 to 2020.

"I found it super powerful because you actually had time to remember the person," says Tiessen, who has since moved to Waterloo. "It was really, really lovely, actually."

At Listowel Mennonite Church in southern Ontario, the Eternity Sunday service is not identical every year but always includes a way for individuals to recognize by name their loved ones who have died.

One year, people were invited to write the name of their loved one on a piece of paper. Children collected them and taped them to a wall in the sanctuary.

The service usually includes songs or Bible readings of mourning and an acknowledgement of grief and its impact on church members.

"We don't have to be smiley and happy that day," says Nancy Frey, the church's pastor. "We can bring our sadness and our experience of loss to the worship service and bring that to God in the form of lament."

Since Frey joined Listowel's staff in 2019, the church has tended to observe Eternity Sunday on the Sunday closest to November 1. Frey likes to leave the last Sunday of the church calendar for Christ the King Sunday, as designated by the lectionary.

Frey lived for many years in Benin and Burkina Faso, two West African countries where All Saints' Day is a national holiday, and believes there's something meaningful about joining Christians in a variety of denominations in remembering people who have died.

"If we're going to make a day for it, let's join with the universal church in

PHOTO BY AARON EPP

The "Memory Tree" at Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship.

doing that instead of making it our own thing," Frey says.

'She became visible and celebrated'

For Ingrid Loepp Thiessen, there's one Eternity Sunday that stands out above all others.

As a child, Loepp Thiessen only had one living grandparent—her paternal grandmother—but never got to meet her because she lived in Uzbekistan. Her grandmother died in October 1973, when Loepp Thiessen was 12 years old. She vividly recalls the Totensonntag service at her church, First Mennonite in Winnipeg, that November. She sat with her family, all of them waiting to hear her grandmother's name.

"On that Memorial Sunday, when my Oma's name—Margaret Loepp—was read, there was finally an honouring of my invisible grandmother and my own unspoken and hidden life-long grief at her being kept from us," Loepp Thiessen says. "By speaking her name out loud, she became visible and celebrated. And certainly, she and our relationships with her, as her grandchildren, was honoured."

Today, Loepp Thiessen lives in Kitchener, Ontario, where she is the spiritual care coordinator at Sunnyside, a long-term care home with approximately 250 residents. It's a place, she says, where life and death are always touching: between 80 and 100 residents die each year.

Three times annually, Loepp Thiessen organizes a memorial service for residents who have died. "We need those chances to mourn and lament and be outward about what we're feeling inside," Loepp Thiessen says. "I've learned over the years that can be healing for us."

She believes it's important for churches to take time to publicly acknowledge loved ones who have died. "It's a pause to name what is true inside of us, which is the grief that we carry forever. That person is always going to be gone, so that grief is always going to be there. It's not going to be ocean swells all the time—sometimes it will be just a ripple—but it's always there."

In Loepp Thiessen's experience, people often shy away from talking about death. "I don't think people get that grief is always there," she adds. "We don't talk about grief. We don't talk about death. So, let's have one Sunday a year where it's OK to do that."

PHOTO BY AARON EPP

For churches that want to start observing Eternity Sunday, Loepp Thiessen suggests inviting people to come forward to light a candle in memory of their dead loved one is a simple ritual to start with. She also suggests using the children's time to discuss death. Above all, mentioning the deceased by name is important.

'It's a good time for families'

Back at Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, Eternity Sunday is a draw, says Fran Giesbrecht. People who haven't been to the church in 30 years will show up if one of their loved ones is being honoured. Some even travel from out of province to attend.

"It's a good time for families," he says.

Seven members have died in the last year. That's seven more people whose pictures will appear in the slideshow on November 26, and seven more small bronze nameplates that will be added to the memory tree.

Giesbrecht anticipates a meaningful morning. "I would say there's no one who doesn't feel the sacredness of that service."

For discussion

1. Which rituals of remembering have you found most meaningful?

2. Why is it so important for the church to find gentle ways to talk about grief and death?

3. What is significant about lighting a candle or hearing a person named? Do actions like these create holy moments of remembering for you?

4. Dora Dueck describes the final days of her husband's life. What similar experiences have you had?

5. To what extent do you think reading and talking about grief and death can calm our fears?

—By Barb Draper

OPINION

FROM OUR LEADERS

Teach us to pray

Josh Wallace

On a Wednesday in mid-October, I'm at the auto shop for winter tires; a TV on the wall flashes tanks, rubble and protests alongside talking heads.

On social media, I can't look away from children held hostage or from parents pulling kids from collapsed buildings.

When my church gathers on Sunday, I struggle for words to pray, our requests cracking on the complexity of suffering and violence.

I don't think the little congregation that meets in my backyard is alone in this. In the face of the crisis in Gaza, we do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words (Romans 8:26).

God responds with wisdom through community. I asked other pastoral leaders in Mennonite Church Saskatchewan, "How is your congregation responding to the crisis in Gaza?" The following is what they told me.

Some feel the struggle sharply; strong opinions pull in opposite directions just below the surface in their congregations. There's a temptation to keep prayers bland: ". . . for the situation in Israel-Palestine." But one pastor confesses to feeling more and more "courageous" to explore the "complexities of peace"—making peace, imagining peace. Another says that feeling "at a total loss" as to how to respond makes it easy for this crisis to "blend into all the other personal and universal challenges."

Congregations consistently share a basic hope that, in the words of one minister, "conversation and compassion might carry the day." Another says her group asks for "strength for organizations" and offers thankfulness for those trying to help.

Many turn to Mennonite Central Committee, Community Peacemaker Teams, or Mennonite Church Canada for "words and context" as they bring this crisis into their worship. One pastor uses Psalm 13 to enter the work of shared lament.

My heart echoes words from another worship leader: "It's hard to know what to say these days except that this is God's world, and we are all connected."

I also turn to MC Canada's Palestine Israel Network. Since 2016 this group has worked for justice and life in Israel-Palestine. Already they've provided guidance for prayer and action, but I ask them to elaborate:

What are their prayers for the crisis in Gaza?

They tell me of weaving between "lament and intercession." They lament the "immense inhumanity and suffering . . . that the international community hasn't done enough . . . that God hasn't stepped in to miraculously stop the carnage."

But they also intercede: for "relief for the two million victims of the blockade and bombing campaign" and that "desperately needed medical aid, food and water can get through."

What are one or two stories you feel need to be heard, I ask them.

They point me to stories of young people growing up in Gaza, "what it's like not to be able to remember a time before the 16-year siege, while your neighbourhood endures bombing and threats of bombing." They also remind me of Palestinians working for just peace nonviolently amid suffering that began "long before the latest explosion."

Then I ask about one or two actions by which congregations can respond to the crisis in a good way.

Start with prayer—prayer as action, prayer accompanying action. Next, they suggest, choose to learn the "long quest for a just peace" of the Palestinian people. Finally, they ask us to write to our MPs. "Tell them that Canada must do better at upholding international law when it comes to Palestine and Israel."

When we gather in my backyard, we pray, "Creator God, we lift to you the weeping world. Our sisters and our brothers cry. Creation groans. Rise up and do what only you can do. Turn rulers' hearts away from war."

Lord, teach us to pray.

UNSPLASH PHOTO BY TIMOTHY EBERLY

Josh Wallace serves as church engagement minister for Mennonite Church Saskatchewan.

THE CHURCH HERE AND THERE

Salt and light: Structures and policies

Arli Klassen

I like paying attention to structures and policies. My attention was caught on Sunday when the visiting preacher, Fanosie Legesse of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, said that wisdom is when churches shape structures and policies to be salt and light in the world. Every board or management team that I have been part of has spent significant time on these topics, because structures and policies always need updates and changes.

PIXABAY PHOTO BY CONGERDESIGN

Our churches in Canada, at all levels, are quite formally structured. At the local level we have councils, boards, leadership teams, committees, task forces and long "slates" where we elect (or appoint) people into many different congregational roles. This gives us clarity on who makes decisions and who does things. Then we have our regional churches. Then we have our nationwide church, Mennonite Church Canada. And then we have our global church, Mennonite World Conference (MWC). Most of us who are members of a local congregation are automatically members of the others (with some exceptions).

I am intrigued when I hear some people talk about how the wider church is irrelevant to their lives. Their lives are oriented to worship and relationships in their local congregation.

Then I hear other people describe the wider church as more diverse (theologically and culturally), more welcoming, and more life-giving for them than what is possible locally.

And then there are some people who work hard at finding a balance for all parts of church—locally, regionally, nationally and internationally (but then don't have time for any relationships outside of church).

Over the years I have had a finger or two in all these different "levels" of church. I often hear comments people make about our many levels of church:

- **I love going** to an MWC assembly. It is the only time I feel that church is truly dynamic and Spirit-filled.
- **We're so thankful** that our regional church was there to help us manage our church conflict or the transition between pastors.
- **Why do we** need a detailed Confession of Faith from our nationwide church? MWC's Statement of Shared Convictions is all I need and all my congregation needs.
- **I don't know** what benefit our congregation gets from our regional church. And we don't want them telling us what to do.
- **I'm so glad** we have church structures beyond our local congregation to train, support and strengthen our pastors. They set standards for our pastors, and help us hold our pastors accountable.
- **Our local congregation** is going through a lot right now—funerals, people leaving, new people coming. Inviting speakers or content from other parts of the church just does not seem to connect with what is happening within our local congregation.
- **Being light and** salt in the whole world means collaboration with many parts of church beyond my local congregation. I'm so glad my congregation benefits from those relationships.

We've all heard the phrase that structures and policies need to serve the people, and not the other way around. How do we adapt and right-size our structures and policies at all levels in order to better be salt and light in our local communities, our country and our world? What could be released from our structures?

As César García from MWC likes to say, "we are a movement not an institution." I hope so. I pray for wisdom that all parts of church will keep changing in ways that enable the church to better be salt and light in the world.

Arli Klassen is a member of First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, and a staff member of MWC. Earlier this year, she completed terms on the boards of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada and Mennonite Church Canada.

Invisible barriers to becoming an intercultural church

Joon Park

At WBUR, Boston's National Public Radio station, a very interesting testimony appeared three years ago titled "A Dual Degree from Oxford. A Medical Degree from Harvard. Neither Protected Me from Racism." It's from Tafadzwa Muguwe, a Zimbabwean-born Rhodes scholar and Harvard-trained physician.

Back in the U.S., an early memory from medical school was seeing a white patient after the professor left the room for a moment. "Where do you go to school?" the patient asked. My white coat was emblazoned with "Harvard Medical School" in large red letters above the front pocket. 'Harvard,' I responded.

"Howard sends students here?" The patient found it easier to imagine I was visiting from the preeminent [historically black university]—450 miles away—than belonging to the current institution, as embroidered on my white coat. Who, then, belongs at Harvard? . . .

Early in training, I received feedback from a professor who remarked, "Internationals like you do well on tests but struggle with clinical skills." Ironically, I was receiving credit for testing well, but in the same breath, the goalposts were shifted. It wasn't the last time I would hear from this professor, and ultimately, these encounters proved detrimental. I wondered, what do others with influence believe? How is the institution failing people like me? Over time, I've developed a sensitivity from the accumulation of these microaggressions.

My Flashback Memory 1: At my previous Mennonite home church in B.C., where we spent 15 years, my family was part of the balcony gang. We always sat there with a few other families and people of colour with a mere hope of designating this place as an international welcome arena. An old white man always sat two rows behind us; we sometimes exchanged greetings. He was a church greeter. One day when we entered the church with our two daughters, who grew up in this church, one of them went to retrieve a bulletin from the greeter. He responded by saying, "You no speak English?" Can you imagine how our daughters responded? They fumed.

My Flashback Memory 2: As an Asian male pastor and first-generation immigrant to Canada whose mother tongue is Korean, I often hear unsolicited feedback from anonymous white congregants: "Your English is good to hear!"

Little do they know that I have invested more than 40 hours to prepare and practice the sermon and to also print out an additional transcript. When I hear comments like this, it shuts down and shrinks my confidence in public speaking. The comment overlooks the content of my character and the material I just preached on. I question what their perception is of other ethnic people due to their English skills.

According to Kevin Nadal, a professor of psychology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, microaggressions are "the everyday (usually brief and routine) verbal, nonverbal and environmental slights, snubs or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative message to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership" (such as a racial minority).

The reason why "micro" is attached to aggression is that people who express these insulting words or behaviours are not aware of them. Yet this level of micro does not mean it has a small impact. It is quite the opposite; it can bring life-changing harm. According to Nadal, someone commenting on how well an Asian American speaks English, which presumes the Asian American was not born here, is one example of a microaggression. It also makes the assumption that Americans must speak English fluently.

No one is immune to committing microaggressions. What the intercultural church sternly asks of us is how to raise and reinforce our level of cultural sensitivity in order to create a harm-free environment for the unity of the intercultural community.

The success of pursuing an intercultural church does not come from an audacious mission statement and great leadership but from a sensitive mindset in the pews and podium to cherish every detail of dealing with people—their feelings, emotions and psyches. This is a very delicate divine enterprise.

Two saints' words are pertinent. Therese of Lisieux said, "It's not the big things that make us saints; it's the little things every day." Teresa of Calcutta said, "Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies."

Oh yes, small always matters!

Joon Park serves as intentional interim co-pastor at Holyrood Mennonite Church in Edmonton. He can be reached at cwcfounder@gmail.com.

Opened eyes

Troy Watson

Charles Dickens wrote *A Tale of Two Cities* nearly 200 years ago. His opening lines describe our world today, as aptly as anything published in recent years. He writes:

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair."

I come from a long line of Scottish ancestors predisposed to melancholy and pessimism. It requires little effort for my siblings and me to notice we're in the worst of times. Our ability to see what's wrong with a situation or the world in general is first-class. You might even call it a gift.

However, our ancestors also bestowed upon us a peculiar sense of humour, enabling us to always find something to laugh about. We instinctively find something funny even in the most dire and dark circumstance.

Not everyone "gets" or appreciates our peculiar brand of comedy. One's sense of humour is as unique as one's fingerprints. Regardless of your comedic sensibilities, when your eyes are opened to the paradoxical fullness of reality, you simultaneously see the tragedy and comedy in life. This means you can almost always find something to laugh about.

The American poet E.E. Cummings said, "The most wasted of all days is one without laughter." German theologian Karl Barth said, "Laughter is the closest thing to the grace of God."

Laughter is one of the greatest gifts God has given us. Sometimes it's the only thing we have to keep us going. The movie *Life is Beautiful* is a wonderful reminder of the life-giving power of humour and laughter.

Of course, there are inappropriate times to laugh. The Bible teaches us to weep with those who weep. To be human is to empathize and care for those who are suffering. Yet, it also teaches us to laugh with those who laugh. If we refrain from laughter until there is no more suffering or injustice on earth, we will never laugh. It's important to find occasions for laughter, especially in the dark seasons. Maintaining a somber attitude of despair rarely brings more light into the world, but laughter can.

We are called to work for peace and justice, but if injustice and suffering is all we see, our eyes haven't been opened to the paradoxical fullness of life. When our eyes are opened to God's presence and activity in the world, we see the paradox of life. We see both the horror and the hope, that the world is both awful and amazing, filled with beauty and light as well as injustice and pain. We see the world has gotten better and is getting better, while acknowledging it could improve even more, with our help.

Many people are so focused on the problems that they ignore the progress. It's important to recognize and celebrate the good, while marching toward the best. We should feel encouraged by the people, organizations and systems that are changing and working for justice and peace. We should be grateful for how far we've come. Our work is not done, but we're making progress.

On the flip side, some people underestimate the real problems we face in our society and world by overemphasizing the "positives." If those of us with privilege and power, enjoying the "best of times," can't see this is the worst of times for many people, we should heed the quote attributed to Gandhi: "The true measure of any society is found in how it treats its most vulnerable members."

The Bible says we are one body. If one part suffers, we all suffer. The truth is, this is not the best of times for some and the worst of times for others. There is only one reality that we all share. We are all in this together. As Martin Luther King said, "Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." This means the responsibility to change the world doesn't rest squarely on your shoulders, but it also means the suffering of others is not their burden alone. It's ours too. For we are one.

"Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

As our eyes are opened to the paradoxical reality we all share and participate in, we are liberated to join God's work in meaningful ways. And to share an occasional laugh or two while we're at it.

Troy Watson is a pastor at Avon Mennonite Church in Stratford, Ontario.

God's story, our story

Part III: Who owns your church building?

Kara Carter

This six-part series draws on Kara Carter's PhD studies, for which she conducted five focus groups with Mennonite Church Eastern Canada pastors.

For periods of time during the pandemic, sanctuaries sat empty and congregations scattered, worshipping from home. As in-person gatherings and programming adapted, social media and technology became a vital tool to remain connected as the body of Christ.

As the church was unleashed and unbound from its four walls to be church in local neighbourhoods, many came to recognize that language can be a barrier to denominational missional identity. "Going to church" is a common phrase, meaning, going to a building, attending a program or social gathering.

The pandemic showed that what happens within the walls of the church building is an insufficient definition of church. The church is not the building but rather the people of God, commissioned by the resurrected Christ to further God's mission in the world (Matt. 28:16-20).

New life has been unleashed as congregations reimagine their rich resource of buildings and properties. Intentional discernment facilitates space to dream, listen and consider current needs of the congregation and the community. An open posture challenges the approach of holding tightly to buildings that may no longer be meeting congregational needs as active participation and worship attendance decline.

One Mennonite Church Eastern Canada congregation has looked for ways to make the best use of their building and outdoor places. The congregation provides space for a local daycare program and educational programming for Low German speakers. A church house, leased to a denominational non-profit charitable organization, provides affordable housing to low-income households. The congregation dreams about creating a public park with their green space.

Another congregation is engaged in conversation about re-purposing their church property due to significant changes of congregational demographics. This conversation emerged when a homeless man made the church parking lot his home. The situation raised awareness related to poverty and the need for affordable housing in the community.

Amidst enlivened congregational conversations about reimagining or re-purposing buildings and properties, pastoral leaders also share stories that disclose barriers, constraints and the messiness of opening church buildings to the local community. One pastor noted that in their context there is a high level of perfectionism around care for the building. Those who have cared for and maintained the building for decades fear what will happen if the doors are opened wide. Things will be messy.

When a pastor launched a floor hockey ministry, he heard complaints that the floor was "getting scuffed." Additionally, when a group of artisans used the building, some people said: "They're making a mess. They're not cleaning up."

When a congregation gets tripped up about scuff marks on the gym floor or wear and tear of carpets, the church is unclear about the "why" of ministry and mission, including its primary calling and purpose. Amidst perfectionism and protectionism, it is crucial for congregations to wrestle with the question of who owns the building. If the congregation identifies as the building/property owner, the congregation identifies as landowner; if the community is the building/property owner, the congregation identifies as host; if God owns the building/property, the congregation identifies as stewards of God's gift. How a congregation responds to the ownership question informs missional understandings, practice, hospitality and stewardship and uncovers our meaning-making stories.

For new Canadian congregations, building ownership provides security and stability. One new immigrant-founded congregation has grown to a three-language congregation. The building provides space for church plants, a local seniors drop-in ministry and a nursery school. Community gardens have been established. When congregational leadership asked to what extent this translates into more people attending worship, the pastor was quick to respond: "probably zero." But church leaders are pleased with the community connections that have developed.

Another congregation regularly hosts a community seniors' group that meets in the church sanctuary. At one event, the seniors moved pews around, set up tables and served food. The pastor reported that, "no one from the congregation freaked out" about it. The pastor admits that a few years earlier this would not have happened. This experience points toward a congregation's response to the Spirit's nudging, including releasing a tight grip on control and the need for neatness.

What is the Spirit of God saying to our faith communities about church properties that may no longer be meeting ministry needs or proving financially sustainable? As we look ahead, rather than back, what fruits may be produced as we respond to the Spirit's disruption and inspiration?

Kara Carter is pastor of Wellesley Mennonite Church.

Strengthening family ties through intergenerational mediation

Part II: Aging

Cathrin van Sintern-Dick

"My children decided it's time for me to move out of my house and join a retirement community. I don't agree. I feel like I have no say anymore. I can still think, but they are not interested in hearing me out."

'I can still think, but they are not interested in hearing me out.'

Sound familiar? This scenario is not uncommon. Aging can put strain on families. Many factors come into play. Perhaps kids have moved away. For parents, this creates tension between living close to kids and grandkids, versus staying close to church family and longtime friends.

Finances can create stress. Caregiver burnout can come into play. Unevenness in which children provide care can be contentious. Long wait lists for care facilities, succession planning, dementia, forced separation of couples with different care needs and sudden health downturns can all add to the strain.

Intergenerational mediation can provide a safe entry point for families to discuss these matters and develop a plan, well before it is needed. The process protects the dignity of elderly people, creating space for them to express their desires and concerns clearly and openly. This can reduce the guesswork in families and help bring adult children together. At times, it even mends relationships.

Aging can be an uncomfortable topic. It is tempting to push the conversation down the road, but avoiding conversations around aging can lead to missed opportunities to bring families together. Plus, advance planning can reduce the strain if difficulties arise.

"Mom fell today; can you look after her?" At that point, the time for creative solutions has run out. If a family in this scenario has an understanding of the next steps and an awareness of each person's responsibility, stress can be reduced.

Intergenerational mediation can also address situations in which aging parents care for a child with particular needs. They may be asking who will look after their adult child. Will there be compassionate care?

Over 60 percent of Canadians have no written plan when it comes to their caregiving, and 40 percent have had no conversation at all with their family about these matters. Studies have shown the benefits of mediation for individuals and family groups. Mediation can foster hope, ensure safety and reduce the risk of elder abuse, isolation and neglect. It can enhance an elderly or disabled person's autonomy and dignity.

While mediation is often seen as a means to resolve conflict, intergenerational mediation is about preventing conflict, developing plans and creating understanding and therefore reducing the likelihood of conflict in the future.

A mediator does not decide for the family or individuals but provides a process in which they explore possibilities and find agreement. Adult children are encouraged to make decisions and participate in decision-making for the benefit of the whole family.

Due to its very nature, intergenerational mediation can involve larger numbers of participants, including older adults, family members, friends and others who offer assistance. Paid caregivers, hospital staff, nursing home and/or community care representatives, physicians and other professionals are all common participants. Together they work on a plan for the future.

Cathrin van Sintern-Dick is a former pastor and chaplain, who now serves as regional ministry associate for Mennonite Church Eastern Canada. She is also a trained and experienced mediator.

Turning church inside-out

An interview with Judith McCartney

By Madalene Arias
Eastern Canada Correspondent

During her community outreach work, Judith McCartney will typically ask people: "Did you know Christ walked 22,000 miles in his lifetime of ministry?"

McCartney believes in venturing outside the church doors and putting on some miles.

She's spent nearly 40 years in ministry and non-profit work, and she worries that churches do not focus enough on growth. In her assessment, they prioritize establishing sustainability within the walls of their worship facilities at the expense of connecting with neighbours in the community and marketplace. She feels this approach will lead to the death of churches and faith-based non-profits.

SUPPLIED PHOTO

Judith McCartney (front right) with youth leaders she works with.

On a grey afternoon in the middle of October, I met McCartney at Good Shepherd Community Church in Scarborough, Ontario. She works part time at Good Shepherd and part time for Connect City in Toronto.

Sitting on the wooden steps before the worship hall, she tells me she is now entering the "twilight years" of her ministry, thinking about passing the work along. She finds herself thinking about Elijah and Elisha in the Old Testament.

"He has this mantle, and he just throws it at Elisha," says McCartney, adding that readers often gloss over this detail.

"I don't want to hand off the mantle that way," she says.

McCartney began her career in the projects of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and then attended Bible college in Ontario. By 1984, she had commenced urban work in Toronto. Through the decades, she has focused on empowering people for leadership.

Nine years ago, Judith and her husband, Colin McCartney, launched a faith-based non-profit called Connect City in Toronto. Mennonite Church Eastern Canada provided a 10-year grant for the work. By that time, both McCartney and her husband were ministry veterans with years invested in exactly this type of work.

They were coming from Urban Promise Toronto (UPT), an inner-city ministry they'd started in 1998. As Colin McCartney described in his 2008 book, *The Beautiful Disappointment: Discovering Who You Are Through the Trials of Life*, UPT was an inner-city ministry that served children, youth and their mothers living in "high-risk" communities.

Through this ministry, the McCartneys developed a Street Leader Program which

trained teens and young adults to become leaders in their own neighborhoods. Youth who joined the program lived in communities plagued by gang violence, drug dealing and a lack of socially acceptable ways to earn an income.

They moved on from this project in 2012. Like UPT, Connect City uses outreach to bring the gospel to people. McCartney explains that the key is to do it in a way that is culturally relevant.

"In the 1950s, you know what was culturally relevant? Sunday School," she says. "Everybody went to church. Everybody doesn't go to church now."

She notes that Jesus's ministry was full of taboos; he hung out at the well, attended parties and healed on the Sabbath. McCartney says all these activities serve as examples of growth and innovation for modern ministry.

This model informs Connect City.

"We don't really have a cookie cutter way of ministering to people," says McCartney. "We sit there and ask the Lord and look around to see what is relevant."

The core of their mission is to help followers of Jesus join one another in unique expressions of church and to grow in Christ.

Currently, Connect City runs four of these types of unique expressions.

Warden Underground is a church plant located in a government housing project in Southern Scarborough. Youth who attend participate in leadership and confidence-building activities.

Screenfish Toronto uses film and pop-culture to foster faith-based dialogue.

SoulHouse opens its doors to people who have been hurt by the church in their past. McCartney hosts this group in her home through weekly dinners. She welcomes people of all ages, beliefs and walks of life to sit around her harvest table to enjoy a meal and open discussion on scripture.

Unity is Connect City's newest ministry. Five years ago, someone staying at a nearby hotel approached the McCartneys and told them the hotel was sheltering asylum seekers. The person suggested the McCartneys come take a look.

By Christmas Eve of that year, Connect City arrived at the hotel with face painters, arts and crafts workshops, two volunteers dressed like Santa Claus and 800 gifts for the children.

What began as a holiday gesture gave way to Unity, a ministry devoted to displaced children and families living in emergency housing situations.

Currently, they provide weekly movie nights, evening programs to school-aged children and Christmas parties. They developed Camp Unity, which runs in the summer and extends its programs to homeless children and children of refugees. The goal of this ministry is to help connect newcomers with Canadian culture and with Jesus.

"I guess part of my passion is that I was an immigrant," says McCartney. "I was poor. We had to figure things out. We looked different."

McCartney is originally from Indonesia. Her family immigrated to Canada in the '70s. They were the only non-white family in Woodstock, Ontario. She remembers her brothers being bullied.

At age 11, she lost her mother to a brain aneurysm. To keep a promise he'd made to her mother, McCartney's father left a lucrative job as a truck driver for work in a factory. This significantly reduced the family's income. In his grief, her father also became ill.

"The household was starting to dilapidate," says McCartney. "I had to lie about what I got for Christmas because all my friends were getting Christmas presents."

By December 2024, the MCEC grant will dry up. As the time to move on draws closer, McCartney grows concerned over what she will leave behind for future generations and how she will pass on the mantle.

She feels an urgency in helping churches understand that ministries must be balanced between work within the walls of the church and putting on some miles in the community.

"I say this humbly, you know," McCartney says. "I feel like we need to leave something for seven generations to come—without our names on it. I don't want my name on it."

Attending to war

Excerpts of
An Open Letter from Palestinian Christians to Western Church Leaders and Theologians
October 20, 2023

"*Learn to do right; seek justice; defend the oppressed*" (Isaiah 1:17).

We, at the undersigned Palestinian Christian institutions and grassroots movements, grieve and lament the renewed cycle of violence in our land. As we were about to publish this open letter, some of us lost dear friends and family members in the atrocious Israeli bombardment of innocent civilians on October 19, 2023, Christians included, who were taking refuge in the historical Greek Orthodox Church of Saint Porphyrius in Gaza. Words fail to express our shock and horror with regard to the on-going war in our land. We deeply mourn the death and suffering of all people because it is our firm conviction that all humans are made in God's image. We are also profoundly troubled when the name of God is invoked to promote violence and religious national ideologies.

Further, we watch with horror the way many western Christians are offering unwavering support to Israel's war against the people of Palestine. While we recognize the numerous voices that have spoken and continue to speak for the cause of truth and justice in our land, we write to challenge western theologians and church leaders who have voiced uncritical support for Israel and to call them to repent and change. . . .

The brutal and hopeless living conditions in Gaza under Israel's iron fist have regrettably emboldened extreme voices of some Palestinian groups to resort to militancy and violence as a response to oppression and despair. Sadly, Palestinian non-violent resistance, which we remain wholeheartedly committed to, is met with rejection, with some western Christian leaders even prohibiting the discussion of Israeli apartheid as reported by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and B'Tselem, and as long asserted by both Palestinians and South Africans. . . .

Although many Christians in the West do not have a problem with the theological legitimization of war, the vast majority of Palestinian Christians do not condone violence—not even by the powerless and occupied. Instead, Palestinian Christians are fully committed to the way of Jesus in creative nonviolent resistance, which uses "the logic of love and draw[s] on all energies to make peace." Crucially, we reject all theologies and interpretations that legitimize the wars of the powerful. We strongly urge western Christians to come alongside us in this. We also remind ourselves and fellow Christians that God is the God of the downtrodden and the oppressed, and that Jesus rebuked the powerful and lifted up the marginalized. . . .

We also remind ourselves and our Palestinian people that our *sumud* ("steadfastness") is anchored in our just cause and our historical rootedness in this land. As Palestinian Christians, we also continue to find our courage and consolation in the God who dwells with those of a contrite and humble spirit (Isa 57:15). We find courage in the solidarity we receive from the crucified Christ, and we find hope in the empty tomb. We are also encouraged and empowered by the costly solidarity and support of many churches and grassroots faith movements around the world, challenging the dominance of ideologies of power and supremacy.

—Signed by 12 Palestinian Christian organizations. To read the full letter/petition go to change.org and search for "Open letter from Palestinian Christians."

Canada does not support humanitarian truce

On October 27, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution calling for an "immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce" between Israeli forces and Hamas militants in Gaza. The resolution demands "continuous, sufficient and unhindered" provision of lifesaving supplies and services for civilians trapped in Gaza.

One hundred and twenty nations voted in favour of the resolution. The U.S., along with 13 other countries, voted against it. Canada abstained.

Canadian Mennonite asked Foreign Affairs Canada whether Israel's actions since October 7 constitute legitimate self-defense (Prime Minster Trudeau has said Israel has the right to defend itself). At press time, we had not received a response. (Source: UN)

Mennonite links

The horrors of war and the scandal of suffering call us to do something more profound than focus on our response. That said, below is a sketch of Mennonite groups responding to the Gaza war.

Mennonite World Conference has a rich reflection on the war ("A reconciling response . . .") posted on their website.

The Mennonite Church Canada Palestine-Israel Network (PIN) has prayers, statements and context posted on their corner of the MC Canada website. Most Regional Churches also have PINs.

As of November 2, Mennonite Church Canada—which can only speak formally with consent of all Regional Churches—has not issued a statement about the Gaza war. The MC Canada PIN is formally mandated by MC Canada but does not speak for the denomination.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and Canadian Foodgrains Bank are receiving donations in preparation to respond when access to Gaza opens. One MCC partner in Gaza is now distributing aid.

In an MCC release, Sarah Funkhouser and Seth Malone—the organization's

representatives for Jordan, Palestine and Israel—report the following based on conversations with MCC partners in Gaza:

"The overall sentiment here is that this bombing is unprecedented. There's been nothing like it. Whole neighborhoods are wiped out. The amount of destruction is almost unfathomable. And [MCC partners are] doing their best to stay safe, but they say they fear for their lives every night. And we're very worried for them day in and day out."

Violence in West Bank spikes following Hamas attack

By Will Braun

Eid Sulieman says the war in Gaza has created cover for increased violence against Palestinians in the West Bank, including in his village.

Gaza and the West Bank are geographically separated Palestinian territories. The main hostilities now are in Gaza, where Hamas is based. Violence of a different form is increasing in the West Bank.

Speaking by phone from his village, Umm Al Khair in the South Hebron Hills, Sulieman tells of the masked Israeli settlers in Israel Defense Forces uniforms who showed up two nights earlier with automatic weapons. They held Sulieman and 16 other men on their knees at gunpoint for an hour and a half. The captives were told they would be shot if they moved. Phones were taken away. People were kicked in the back. There was a lot of shouting.

"It was very tense," Sulieman says, noting that machine guns were pointed at their heads.

Sulieman says the men insisted he and his fellow captives condemn the Hamas attacks. Sulieman informed the men he did not need to be forced to condemn the attacks. He had done so long before the men arrived.

"I condemn all the killing of human beings from both Israelis and Palestinians," he says. "This makes me sad."

WIKIPEDIA COMMONS MAP BY AMNA RAJOUB, TEXT ADDED BY BETTY AVERY

Eventually Sulieman and the others were released. "It was crazy," he says repeatedly.

This sort of intimidation and violence has increased significantly in the West Bank since the Hamas attacks in Israel on October 7. Sulieman says that for Palestinians, the West Bank is more dangerous now than ever before.

In the nearby village of Susiya, Israelis blocked the roads into the village, destroyed water infrastructure and beat residents. As part of ongoing threats, Sulieman says settlers knocked on every door in the village and told people they needed to leave in 24 hours or they would be shot. "This is very terrifying for my friends there," he says.

The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, an NGO also known as B'Tselem, reports that 13 small Palestinian communities have been forcibly transferred "under cover" of the Gaza war. In some cases, Israeli settlers assaulted Palestinians and destroyed their property. In all cases, people in the communities faced intense threat and harassment from armed settlers and occasionally from soldiers.

Sulieman, an artist and peace

advocate, provides photo documentation for B'Tselem.

The Jerusalem-based organization, started in 1989, also reports attacks on Israeli civilians by Palestinians.

According to the UN, some 700,000 Israeli settlers live in 279 settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Most countries consider these settlements illegal, as the area is designated for Palestinians. The U.S. formally objects to the settlements, yet more and more are built, directly and forcibly displacing Palestinians from their homes and lands.

Sulieman and his wife have four young daughters. He says about 20 percent of his family's land has been confiscated. Settler homes now sit on some of it. An Israeli settler lives within several metres of Sulieman's house. "We see them in their homes, see them walking around."

The night before Sulieman spoke with *Canadian Mennonite*, settlers burned a Palestinian home in the neighbouring village. There is virtually no meaningful recourse for Palestinians. Israeli settlers act with near impunity. "There is no law to stop them," Sulieman says, noting that only the tiniest fraction of complaints registered with the Israeli police ever come to anything.

Sulieman speaks with the tone of someone who is irrepressibly upbeat, a glowing spirit.

But he says he feels "very helpless." Given the constant encroachment of Israel, he wonders whether any Palestinians will be left in that area of the West Bank—known as Area C—in 10 years. "The future is very, very black," he says. "You don't know what will happen tomorrow."

At times, Sulieman can hear the bombs exploding in Gaza. Stray rockets launched from Gaza have landed nearby. Violence is all around in many forms.

The energy in Sulieman's voice wanes. "We pray that the war will stop," he says. "Maybe peace will come one day. . . . We hope, but hope nowadays is very, very less."

PHOTO BY EID SULIEMAN

Israeli settler homes near Eid Sulieman's home.

A Christian nation?

A Mennonite perspective on religious freedom
Part 1 of 3

By *César García*

"We, *nosotros*, we saved Colombia from being handed over to communists!" Those were the words of a celebrity pastor from a Colombian mega-church, spoken to a cheering crowd in California. That pastor referred to the recent success of a "No" campaign in the popular referendum that voted against implementing a peace agreement in my country. The government and the insurgent rebel group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), signed that agreement in 2016.

Some years before that referendum, a Catholic priest said to me: "It is so interesting to see all these evangelical pastors looking for more political power and religious privileges while some of us as Catholics want to take distance from a close relationship with the Colombian government and all the damage and corruption it has brought to our church."

CM FILE PHOTO

César García

The search for political power and privileges is increasing among evangelicals in Latin America. The close connection between some pastors and partisan politics concerns some of us as Mennonites, especially when Christian leaders try to impose their values on others.

How the Mennonite tradition emerged may help us understand our concerns.

In the shadow of the Grossmünster cathedral, the main Catholic church in Zurich, a group of young people gathered in a house to commit an act of subversion: adult baptism.

Their study of the Bible had led them to different understandings than the state church. As they understood it, baptism symbolized their conscious decision to submit to the lordship of Jesus Christ and follow his example in life—a commitment only an adult could make. That decision challenged the millennium-old practice in the Catholic Church of baptizing infants.

This radical act on January 1525 marked the symbolic beginning of what would become known as the Anabaptist ("re-baptizer") movement. Years later, many of them were known as Mennonites.

For the Mennonites of the 16th century, the response of faith led immediately to fellowship in a community of believers through baptism. Mennonites demonstrated their voluntary, free decision to follow Christ through baptism, which at the same time was the point of entrance into the church. That, of course, implied that the church consisted of believers who had decided in a voluntary way to form a new community.

This way of understanding Christian faith and church requires the freedom to choose—your confession of faith, your values, the ethics that will characterize your life, the education you want for your children and your lifestyle as a Christian.

It also implied that there would be people who would choose differently from those who decide to follow Christ. And even those who follow Christ may choose to do it differently from one another.

To ensure the existence of a voluntary church, there must be freedom and the possibility of saying 'no' to Christian faith, Christian values and Christian lifestyle. Without liberty and a guarantee of freely living out decisions about religion and ethics, there won't be a real church.

In the words of the historian William Estep: "The Anabaptists were not interested in constructing a church through coercion, either by infant baptism or by the power of the magistrate. . . . They were concerned with gathering a church of believers who had freely responded to the proclamation of the gospel."

This way of thinking rejects the idea of depending on human governments to promote the Christian faith, its values or its way of living. Indeed, looking for ways of getting legal, religious privileges over other faiths is fundamentally incompatible with this perspective. ⁂

This three-part article is adapted from a speech Mennonite World Conference general secretary César García gave as a featured speaker at the 9th World Congress of the International Religious Liberty Association. Reprinted with permission.

What is our enemy?

By Gareth Brandt

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm." (Ephesians 6:10-13).

Note that my question is "*What* is our enemy?" and not "*Who* is our enemy?" Before Ephesians says what the enemy is, it reminds us who the enemy is not. "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood." People are never the enemy; they are the victims of the enemy. Again, people are never the enemy.

The enemy is not people who belong to Hamas. The enemy is not Vladimir Putin. The enemy is not Justin Trudeau or Donald Trump. The enemy is not people who disagree with you. The enemy is not progressives or conservatives. People are never the enemy.

This text clearly tells us that our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against rulers, authorities, powers and spiritual forces. People are never the enemy.

What or who are these "rulers, authorities, powers, spiritual forces" mentioned in verse 12? All of these terms refer to the same thing. They are not a person named Satan nor are they demons flying around. They are mysterious forces behind the institutions, organizations, empires and tyrants in our world. There are spiritual systems and structures that order and govern our world. They are at work in Israel/Palestine, in our government, in our church, in our workplaces, even in our families.

These "powers" are difficult to define and describe. If we look at other scriptures, especially Colossians 1, we find that these powers were actually created by God to serve humanity, but they have rebelled and become evil.

What do the evil powers do? Their agenda is to destroy and divide. As Lee Camp writes in his book *Mere Discipleship*, "rather than serving humankind according to God's original intention, [evil powers] enslave; rather than freeing humankind to live the abundant life in communion with their creator, they oppress."

In chapter 4 of Ephesians, we read that God is one and the church is called to unity. God's design is for all humanity, indeed all creation, to live in harmony. The powers are doing everything in their power to tear things apart, to keep people separated and to break relationships. The enemy is enmity itself.

That's why warfare is the world's greatest evil. War pits people against people instead of people united against these evil forces of dehumanization, selfishness and separation. The enemy is the unseen and impersonal force that drives people to hate and keeps people from each other.

Why do we have so much violence in the world? Why do we fight and divide in the church? Because we have not recognized the true enemy. The enemy is dehumanization and division, selfishness and strife.

Gareth Brandt taught at Columbia Bible College for many years. He attends Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C.

Holy optimism

An interview with Shel Boese

Story and photo by Amy Rinner Waddell
B.C. Correspondent

At the time of assuming his new role as executive minister of Mennonite Church B.C. in August, Shel Boese recalls being asked about his vision for MC B.C. "It doesn't matter what my vision is," he replied, "we need to determine that together. It needs to be a shared vision."

That philosophy sums up Boese's cooperative approach. He admits he doesn't care for the title of executive minister, as he sees himself more as a shepherd than an office executive.

Boese's task now is to get acquainted with the people, pastors and the 23 congregations of MC B.C. So far, he's visited most of them, or visited with their leaders. He has spoken in several.

"In our polity, it's relational, discerning together," says Boese. "For me to be able to do this job well, I need to know people. What are their hopes, challenges, shared vision?"

Shel Boese is the new executive minister of Mennonite Church B.C.

Though he has a background that spans several denominations, Boese says he has been "very Anabaptist all along." He became acquainted with Mennonites during his childhood in South Dakota, through Salem-Zion Mennonite Church of Freeman and the Friedensberg Bible Church. He attended a Baptist seminary, was ordained in the Assemblies of God denomination, has helped plant churches with the Christian and Missionary Alliance, and was involved in Toronto with the Meetinghouse, part of the Be In Christ denomination (formerly Brethren in Christ).

Boese spent two years in Sarasota, Florida, pastoring a Mennonite congregation, and most recently served at Pilgrim Baptist Church in Vancouver.

For Boese, the concept of a "centred-set church" is vital. This refers to the idea of fostering Christian communities that aren't based on drawing lines to exclude others, but rather putting Jesus at the centre. "Centre-set goes back to the Radical Reformers," he says, "and back to the New Testament. It's reading the Bible through a Jesus-lens . . . the Gospels, Sermon on the Mount. Paul uses the language too in magnifying Jesus as the fullness of God."

For Boese, church-building, both through revitalization and starting new congregations, is a priority. He believes new congregations don't necessarily have to look like traditional ones.

Other priorities include supporting churches in transition and finding new funding streams, such as endowments.

Coming into MC B.C. with fresh eyes, Boese observes that there is a wide variety of beliefs in MC B.C., with those on both ends of the theological spectrum needing to have a voice. A theologically centred-set church can "agree to disagree" on many issues, he says.

"We need to find a more generous space," he believes. "Some of our conservative churches have said they felt ignored. Some progressives wonder why we're not working faster."

Boese senses excitement about the future, especially among younger leaders. "People sense there are good things to come, with relational unity and long institutional relational glue that binds people together." He says he would like there to be "an Anabaptist church in each major city in B.C., to see us have a real robust footprint."

Boese would like to see an improvement in "how we posture ourselves in the community physically," including upgrades in many buildings to leverage rental opportunities.

Boese wonders how MC B.C. can better relate to the Mennonite Brethren in the province, who vastly outnumber members of MC B.C.

"I sense there is a holy optimism that God has more for us," he concludes. "We have a purpose and there is a mission. There is a reason why we're here. I'm sensing some real hope for the future. It helps to fuel the creativity to change."

Charting a path to old age

By Helmut Lemke

Getting old was not something I looked forward to. The shift from being someone who gives to someone who receives requires adjustment, but with God's help we can prepare for getting old gracefully.

I kept this in mind when I built my house. It sits on the west slope of Burnaby Mountain, with a beautiful view of the ocean and the coastal mountains. Though I was not quite 60 at the time, I designed it especially for my old age. Given the slope downward from the street, most houses on the block had stairs going down to the entrance, but I designed a bridge from the street to the top floor of the house that would allow for a level entrance and even wheelchair access.

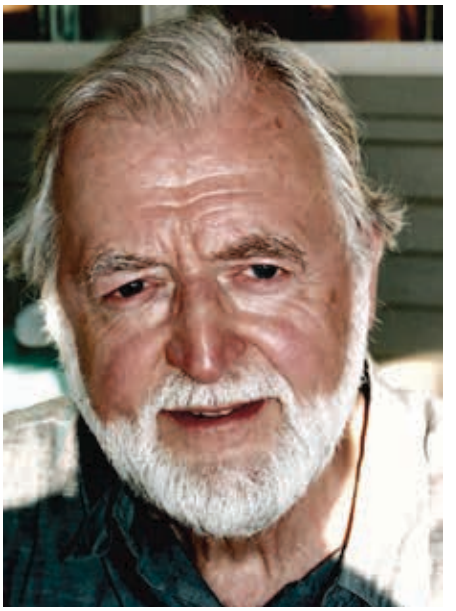
I designed the main floor as a self-contained apartment. On the second floor, I provided rooms for my children while they still lived at home. These became guest rooms when they left. On the lower floor, I designed a completely furnished in-law suite.

When my wife died in 2007 at age 73, I lived alone in my big house. I decided to offer the in-law suite to a student couple from Simon Fraser University. We set up a contract that involved them helping me with cooking, cleaning and laundry in lieu of paying rent. This worked well for 13 years.

Over time, upkeep of my big house became more challenging. I began to think about my next move. With my daughter, I visited nine seniors' homes in greater Vancouver. The cost for room and board varied from $3,900 to $9,000 a month. I chose Amica Arbutus. I appreciated the bright, spacious suites, the excellent food, the available health services and the good entertainment program.

I was able to try out the suite for a week before finalizing my decision. However, I was not quite ready to leave my home. Half a year later, Amica called to say they had a suite available. I had to make a quick decision. I moved in two weeks later. I was 94 years old at the time. Although it was not easy to leave my beautiful home and my car, I knew the time was right.

Aging is also made more bearable by new technology. My son, a former executive at Microsoft, came to me one day and said, "Dad, you have to move into the twenty-first century." He brought me a computer and printer, installed it for me, and showed me how to operate it. I can now do all my banking and correspondence online, which is quite helpful since I have no car and my handwriting is no longer legible. I can partake in our church services online and remain connected with my congregation in that way, since I cannot travel anymore.



Helmut Lemke

I rely on my heart pacemaker and my CPAP machine to improve my breathing and heartbeat. My new medicine dispenser calls me when it is time to take my medicine and spews the right amount out for me. This technology gives me a level of independence I would not otherwise have.

Although I can still take care of many things on my own, I am not alone. In my morning meditations I feel close to God. I have come to know a number of my fellow residents and appreciate the kindness of Amica's staff team. My family comes to visit me and to take care of things I can no longer do. I appreciate visits from friends and members of my church.

I am now 97 and have found that getting old is not as difficult and lonely as I had feared. Being cared for and no longer having any pressing responsibilities or stress can even make life enjoyable at times.

Helmut Lemke is a member of Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship, Vancouver.

Theologian empowers lay leaders at workshop in Saskatoon

Story and photo by Emily Summach
Saskatchewan Correspondent

Leading worship was the focus of a two-day workshop organized by Mennonite Church Saskatchewan last month.

More than 30 pastors and lay leaders attended "Called to Be a Worship Leader" at Nutana Park Mennonite Church in Saskatoon October 19–20. Led by professor and former pastor Carol Penner, the workshop focused on what it means to lead worship and its essential role in Christian formation.

"Mennonites have always valued lay leadership, but now, in a time where it's becoming harder to find pastors, strong lay leaders are not optional—they are a necessity," Penner said. "Pastors often go to seminary for training, but where do lay leaders get their equipment? That's why these types of workshops are so important."

'Strong lay leaders are not optional,' says theologian Carol Penner.

Penner, who is the director of theological studies at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, is the author of leadinginworship.com, a blog where she shares worship resources she's written. She started the blog several years ago after noting a lack of prayers available online written from a Mennonite perspective.

Penner's presentations in Saskatoon focused on teaching practical skills, such as constructing meaningful, accessible prayers, and offering examples of how different faith traditions conduct their worship services.

Larry Epp of Rosthern Mennonite Church, who has been a worship leader for more than 30 years, attended the event. He noted that time constraints and feelings of inadequacy can keep people from giving worship leading a try.

He appreciated how Penner presented different structures of worship planning. "When a lot of us are thinking about shrinking congregations, it's helpful to think about how we could reorganize our worship," he said.

In her presentations, Penner recognized that worship in Mennonite churches has evolved significantly in the last decade.

More and more churches are livestreaming their services, land acknowledgments are part of worship at many churches, "passing the plate" to collect the offering has fallen by the wayside and there is a growing openness to including children in the service.

One thing that remains a constant for Penner is the importance of the worship leader in the life of the church.

"The worship leader is the one who sets the tone, ushers people in, communicates that this is a place of welcome: you belong here! You're part of the family of God," she said. "It's about being invitational. It's not just the words you say, it's how you say them."

Penner's reputation as someone with great wisdom and accessible resources made her a clear choice to lead the workshop, according to Curtis Wiens, chairperson of MC Saskatchewan's Pastoral Leadership Commission, which organized the event.

"Rather than go for a really weighty or academic topic, we thought it would be helpful to cover the worship angle," Wiens said. "Nothing about worship is really taken for granted in a post-COVID world, and churches are revisiting their longstanding practice."

Bill to limit MAID criteria fails

By Will Braun

Parliament narrowly defeated a bill that would have prevented the expansion of eligibility for medical assistance in dying (MAID). On October 18, 167 MPs voted against Bill C-314 while 150 voted for it.

The private member's bill was sponsored by Ed Fast, Conservative MP for Abbotsford.

That means that on March 17, 2024, people who suffer "solely from a mental illness and who meet all other eligibility criteria" will become eligible for MAID in Canada, according to the federal justice department website.

The vote blurred usual partisan lines. All Conservative, NDP and Green MPs voted in favour of Fast's bill, as did eight Liberals. Fast says numerous other Liberals had indicated they would support the bill but seemingly changed their minds based on Prime Minster Trudeau's pledge to re-convene a Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying.

Fast does not believe that committee, which is supposed to report in January, will seriously reconsider the merits of MAID for people with mental illness.

Fast says there are no other legislative options at this point, though the government could decide to delay the expansion of eligibility. Fast notes that Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre has said he would revoke the planned changes to MAID if he were elected. The next federal election is slated for October 2025.

Fast says Poilievre has not made further commitments related to MAID legislation, nor is Fast calling for elimination of the current MAID provisions. Fast separates the question of Bill C-314 from basic MAID provisions, which came into force in 2016.

He says there is a "broad consensus" in Canadian society that a limited application of MAID is "reasonably appropriate." This would apply to cases of "incurable illness, intolerable pain and where death is reasonably foreseeable." Fast's concern is not this sort of application of MAID but rather protecting the "most vulnerable from overreach by government."

Ed Fast is the MP for Abbotsford.

When the first MAID legislation was passed, Fast says he and others "were predicting that we were stepping onto a very slippery slope." Those warnings he says, were dismissed as "fear-mongering."

Seven years later, he says, "the slope is so much steeper than we ever expected," noting talk that criteria could expand to include the opioid-addicted and minors.

Fast says the defeat of Bill C-314 "is just the first skirmish." The fight goes on.

"We as society should put a very special emphasis on valuing life," he says, "doing everything we can to enhance the dignity of the individual and provide the supports that Canadians need to live lives of joy."

Fast is a member of Northview Community Church, a Mennonite Brethren congregation.

Two ministers ordained in Mennonite Church Saskatchewan

By Emily Summach
Saskatchewan Correspondent

October was a big month for pastoral leadership in Mennonite Church Saskatchewan as two young pastors, Rodney Hennessey and Curtis Wiens, were ordained by their congregations.

"It was a great month," said Gary Peters, the regional church's interim executive minister. "We've certainly had a handful of ordinations in the past few years, but

this is the first time that we've had two in a month."

Hennessey is the pastor of Grace Mennonite Church in Regina. Originally from Prince Edward Island, he discovered MC Saskatchewan during his last semester at Edmonton's Taylor Seminary in early 2020.

When COVID-19 hit, Hennessey and his family moved in with his in-laws in Esterhazy, Saskatchewan. The churches he had been in conversation with about pastoring decided to hold off on hiring until the effects of the pandemic became more clear.

Amid that uncertainty, Hennessey found Grace Mennonite.

"I'm still blown away to have found this church," he says. "That it happened, it was such a good fit, and that the church was only two hours away from where we were living was incredible."

Hennessey is grateful that Grace Mennonite supported his ordination as well as what it means for his connection to the regional church. "For me, being ordained is just that extra level of support and accountability to the denominational body," he said. "We stand together.... it's another layer of binding us together."

About three hours north, at Aberdeen Mennonite Church in Aberdeen, pastor Curtis Wiens appreciated the opportunity to reflect on his pastoral leadership through the ordination process.

He grew up in MC Saskatchewan and has served in several of the regional church's ministries.

"It was really neat to put experiences into conversation with other ministers in MC Sask," he said. "A lot of the processing about ministry happens internally, in one's own head—where you found growth edges, what has surprised you—but being able to say it out loud was really uplifting."

For regional church leadership, these back-to-back ordinations feel like a new seedling of hope.

"To me, it means that there are younger people who are willing to serve as pastoral leaders and that we as a church are finding it important to discern and grow those pastoral gifts," Peters said. "It's working together to build the kingdom."

SUPPLIED PHOTO

Curtis Wiens (left) stands at the front of Aberdeen Mennonite Church as Gary Peters speaks at his ordination.

Niagara residents celebrate Foodgrains Bank's 40th

By Maria H. Klassen
ST. CATHARINES

To celebrate the 40th anniversary of Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB), people connected to nine CFGB growing projects in the Niagara region came together on October 15 at Vineland United Mennonite Church in Vineland, Ontario, to mark the occasion.

The event was hosted by Tom Neufeld, who serves as stewardship associate for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario and an ambassador for CFGB. He made reference to his father's family receiving international aid in 1921, when MCC started to save lives.

CFGB was started in 1983, and First Mennonite Church in Vineland was one of the first Mennonite churches to carry out a growing project. After going on a food study tour to South Asia in the 1990s, Tom and Mary Anne Neufeld were inspired to initiate a project on 17 hectares (42 acres) donated by Bethesda House, a facility supporting those with special needs. With this, Grow Hope Niagara was born.

Today, about 81 hectares (200 acres) throughout the Niagara region are used for CFGB growing projects. Proceeds of crops grown on these lands are donated to CFGB.

People representing different churches and growing projects shared their experiences during the October 15 celebration. Grace United Church in Dunnville shared how they started off sponsoring a few acres on a farm. When that land became unavailable, they switched to doing a virtual growing project in their church. A board representing a field is divided into squares representing acres, and each square is sold for $200 to raise money for the Foodgrains Bank.

Andy Harrington, executive director of CFGB, was the keynote speaker. The mission of CFGB is to work together to end global hunger. He gave statistics of the reality of global hunger, saying that 783 million people are facing hunger worldwide. One-fifth of these are children under 5 years of age.

Harrington expounded on the three key drivers of food insecurity: conflict, climate change and economic disruptions such as the pandemic.

In the past year, CFGB spent $79.85 million to help 1,103,795 people in 36 countries. The federal government provides much of CFGB's funding. Harrinton talked about the organization's new strategic plan, using established programs and bringing new initiatives and innovations together until all are fed.

"We care because God cares," Harrington said. "God is the father of the fatherless, defender of the widows, orphans and refugees. God invites us to be the image bearers of Christ. We have to do more, and we have to do better. Yes, there is hope."

News briefs

Commemoration of Anabaptism in Zurich

Mennonite World Conference invites guests from around the world to gather in Zurich, Switzerland, on May 29, 2025, to commemorate the beginning of the Anabaptist movement 500 years ago. The chosen theme is "the courage to love." More information to follow.

Brandon Relief Sale concludes after 35 years

Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba announced the conclusion of the Brandon Relief Sale after 35 years of operations in the western Manitoba city. Operations had been suspended since 2019 due to the pandemic. Darryl Lowen, executive director of MCC Manitoba, said that while attendance and volunteer numbers had been good, the load for volunteers in planning and wrap-up was heavy. MCC still has a thrift shop in Brandon.

Source: *Brandon Sun*

Meat canning season begins

The Mennonite Central Committee mobile meat cannery began 2023-24 US operations with a team of four who will oversee volunteers in 29 locations across the U.S. The cannery has not come to Canada since 2019 due to border complications, however, plans and fundraising for a permanent cannery in New Hamburg, Ontario, are underway.

Source: MCC

English-Cheyenne dictionary returned

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary returned a rare English-Cheyenne dictionary and two copies of a rare Cheyenne reading book to Koinonia Indian Mennonite Church and the Southern Cheyenne community in Oklahoma in a special transfer ceremony on Oct. 3, 2023, in Elkhart, Indiana. The books were written by Mennonite missionary Dr. Rodolphe Petter in 1915 and have been in the AMBS library for generations.

Source: AMBS

Altona church connects community members with free monthly meal

By Aaron Epp
Associate Editor

Members of a southern Manitoba church are offering the residents of their town a free monthly meal, served with a side of fellowship and fun.

Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church launched the initiative in September 2022. Anyone who wants a hot meal and time to visit with their neighbours is invited to attend.

The hope with the community meal is that there be no financial barrier and that it would bring people together who aren't normally together, says Mark Tiessen-Dyck, lead pastor at the church. "It's a place where everyone is welcomed and is treated like an equal."

Located about 100 km southwest of Winnipeg, Altona is home to around 4,000 people.

The idea for what would become known as "community meal" started percolating in Tiessen-Dyck's mind in 2019 after he attended a similar function at the Central Station Community Centre in nearby Winkler. The community centre's Café 545 initiative serves a free meal to hundreds of people every Monday.

With support from the church council, Tiessen-Dyck formed a committee that started planning what a monthly community meal in Altona could look like.

In a visioning statement he drafted, Tiessen-Dyck pointed out that the idea of bringing people from all walks of life together for a free meal is consistent with teachings in scripture: Jesus fed crowds of people, dined and fellowshipped with people who were ostracized, called for the disciples to provide for the hungry and the stranger, and taught people to love their neighbour and their enemy.

"I hope it builds relationships and connections, and I hope it fosters peace and is a way for us to share our faith," he says. "I mean, it's hard to find something more Christ-like than eating with people and sharing free food with people."

The church advertises the meal throughout town and stresses that it's for people of all socioeconomic backgrounds.

There have been 11 community meals over the last 14 months. Altona Bergthaler receives help from Seeds Church, and they host the meals at a local community centre called the Community Exchange.

An average of about 150 people have shown up for meals that have included lemon dill chicken with mashed potatoes, meatballs with rice and vegetables, and chicken tacos.

Susianty Braun, a semi-retired chef who operated a local restaurant called the Jasmine Tea Room for nearly two decades, leads the food preparation.

Four years after closing her restaurant, Braun, who was born and raised in Indonesia, is pleased to be preparing food for large groups of people again.

SUPPLIED PHOTO

Mark Tiessen-Dyck (right) recruited Susianty Braun to lead the food preparation for Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church's community meal.

"I love cooking," she says. "People are enjoying the food and having a good time with the people around the table. It gives me joy."

Volunteers help prepare the food, set up the dining hall, serve the food and clean up afterward. For Marilyn Martens, who has volunteered at community meal since the beginning, it's an answer to prayer.

"I had a feeling in me: God, give me a blessing—something to be a part of," Martens says. "And this felt like a good thing."

Martens has attended Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church since 1987 and says that volunteering at community meal has helped her connect more meaningfully with fellow churchgoers.

It's also been a way that she can live out the biblical invitation to imitate Christ. "It's very rewarding," she says, "even if it's tiring."

Organizers are planning to expand the community meal to twice a month next year.

"It's been really exciting and unifying for our church, because it's something that we all support and get behind," Tiessen-Dyck says. "A lot of people from our church of all ages have helped out in a variety of ways."

Perhaps more importantly, it's a way for the church to engage the community. Tiessen-Dyck says he thinks of the question that's often asked in conversations about church work: If your church disappeared, would it matter to your community that you were suddenly gone?

"When I think about that now, I think, well, yeah, there is something that our town would be missing if it weren't for the initiative of our church," Tiessen-Dyck says. "That's really humbling, actually."

Volunteers customize bears and blankets for care home residents

By Maria H. Klassen

Jan Steven, a commissioned chaplain with Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, has found a new way to show care for seniors in long term care facilities. The new venture starts with buying new or next-to-new teddy bears and blankets from the Mennonite Central Committee Christian Benefit Thrift Shop in St. Catharines, Ontario. Then Mary Koop, who, like Steven, attends Grace Mennonite Church in St. Catharines, makes scarves for the stuffed animals and embroiders the name of a long-term care resident on a bear. For the blankets, she makes labels that say "Wrapped in love—Grace friends." Ester Funk, also from Grace Church, crochets blankets or shawls to contribute. Steven adds a card which says, "You are beary sweet," and a bear-paw cookie (diet permitting) to complete the package.

Then the items are brought to long term care residents who get few visitors or are unable to participate in social activities in the home. Depending on the situation, Steven may stay for a visit and come back regularly. At times, the kits are delivered by care home staff.

Steven has visited seniors in long-term care for decades. Her first placement as a social worker was in long term care in the hospital in Sudbury, Ontario. Years later, in an unofficial pastoral role, she and a friend spent many hours visiting seniors in care homes, often bringing flowers and a card. This led to delivering thrift store blankets and eventually plush toys.

Steven says she has had countless memorable conversations with seniors and has developed many wonderful relationships.

Steven currently serves six care residences in the Niagara area.

To date, 70 bear and blanket care kits have been delivered. Steven prays for a loving and listening heart as she delivers these kits. This is something any group can do. Also, donations of bears and blankets are welcome. For more information contact Jan Steven at janscats@gmail.com.

PHOTO BY ANNA WINGER

From left to right Jan Steven, Mary Koop and Ester Funk with soft gifts for care home residents.

Crafting, chaos and community

'Mega Menno' kick-off a success

By Kirsten Hamm-Epp

PHOTO COURTESY OF KIRSTEN HAMM-EPP

Saskatchewan youth doing crafts.

On September 29, 18 participants gathered in Saskatoon to kick off the Mennonite Church Saskatchewan youth programming year. The youth got to know one another in a variety of ways as the event went on, first learning what everyone had for breakfast, then playing 'Never Have I Ever . . .' and using their crafting (and paper airplane making) skills to put on paper the things that make them who they are. Following snack, youth came back into the room to find their papers had been marked, and names and words added to how they describe themselves.

This led to an acknowledgement of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and meaningful conversations about how residential schools marked and scarred people's identities in ways they still carry today. As an example of how we can live lives of reconciliation, the group discussed the land acknowledgement quilt made by Angela Hildebrand and Métis artist Melanie Gamache of Manitoba. The youth were sent home with a photo of the banner as well, to remind them that land acknowledgement and reconciliation takes many forms and to look for ways to include this kind of work in their daily lives.

As the evening wound down and the crafting turned to chaos, participants joined together in a dedication prayer, asking God to make the Mega Menno community a safe space where people can be their weird, wacky and wonderful selves, and experience the fullness of God's love.

Mega Menno events are open to youth in grades 6-12. For info on upcoming events contact Kirsten at youthminister@mcsask.ca.

Kirsten Hamm-Epp serves as MC Saskatchewan youth minister.

FOCUS ON Books & Resources

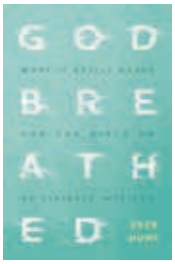
Theology, Spirituality

The Beginning of the Story: Understanding the Old Testament in the Story of Scripture. Timothy J. Geddert. Herald Press, 2023, 208 pages.

The Old Testament has great value because it is the grand narrative of God's relationship with humans. The author says we should interpret the stories in light of the teachings of Jesus. Geddert is professor emeritus of New Testament at Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary. Each chapter concludes with questions for discussion.

God the Creator: The Old Testament and the World God is Making. Ben C. Ollenburger. Baker Academic, 2023, 256 pages.

Ollenburger, a former professor of biblical theology at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, examines the Bible stories that describe the world God is making. God created the world in the beginning and has continued to re-create, as attested to in Genesis, the Psalms, Isaiah and other prophets.



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

Zack Hunt examines biblical inspiration, arguing that viewing the Bible as inerrant approaches idolatry. While the Bible is essential for Christianity, it must be read through the lens of loving God and neighbours.

The Holy in the Night: Finding Freedom in a Season of Waiting. Shannon W. Dycus. Herald Press, 2023, 216 pages.

This Advent devotional, written by the dean of students at Eastern Mennonite University, provides Bible readings and meditations for six weeks. It includes a short six-session guide for use in small groups.

Luke: Believers Church Bible Commentary. Mary H. Schertz. Herald Press, 2023, 480 pages.

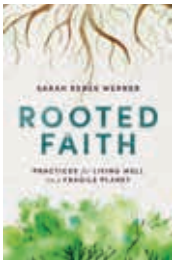
This is volume 36 of the Believers Church Bible Commentary series. Mary Schertz was professor of New Testament at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary from 1988 to 2017.

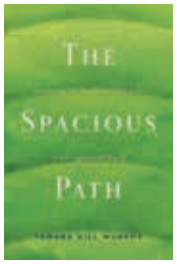
Proclaiming the Good News: Mennonite Women's Voices, 1972-2006. Lois Y. Barrett and Dorothy Nickel Friesen, eds. Institute of Mennonite Studies (AMBS), 2023, 266 pages.

With a variety of authors, this book examines attitudes toward women in Mennonite church leadership and how they changed in the late twentieth century. At the back is a list of over 300 women who were ordained in Canada and the U.S. from the 1970s to 2006.

Rooted Faith: Practices for Living Well on a Fragile Planet. Sarah Renee Werner. Herald Press, 2023, 216 pages.

The author suggests that our traditional interpretation of the Bible has shortchanged us, and we need to relearn how to interact with the earth. At the end of each chapter, she suggests ideas to deepen the reader's connection with God and creation.





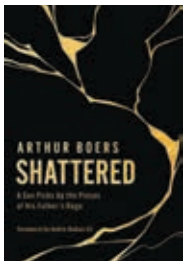
The Spacious Path: Practicing the Restful Way of Jesus in a Fragmented World. Tamara Hill Murphy. Herald Press, 2023, 272 pages.

The author adapts the ancient spiritual practices of Saint Benedict to encourage readers to develop habits of healthy spirituality. At the end of each of four sections there are questions and suggestions for further reflection.

History

Shattered: A Son Picks Up the Pieces of His Father's Rage. Arthur Boers. William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2023, 206 pages.

Boers, a former pastor, grew up in the Niagara area. He reflects on his childhood and teenage years, exploring his faith development and how he came to join the Mennonite church. Throughout the book he tries to make sense of his relationship with his father.



Shaping of a Servant: The Odyssey of a Family. Carl Hansen. Westbow Press, 2023, 286 pages.

In this autobiography, Carl Hansen describes how his father, a Danish immigrant, came to marry a Mennonite girl. Carl grew up in rural Alberta and in Ontario and then prepared himself to be a missionary. A previous book, *Pilgrims Searching for a Home*, tells the story of his grandparents' escape from Russia.

Into Abyssinia: The Odyssey of a Family. Carl Hansen. Westbow Press, 2023, 352 pages.

Carl Hansen attended Eastern Mennonite College in Virginia and married Vera King in 1964. This book tells the story of how they moved to Ethiopia, where they served as missionaries for a total of 32 years. From 1975 to 1984 Hansen was a pastor in Alberta.

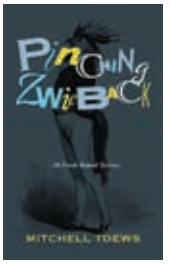
Other books

Eating Like a Mennonite: Food and Community Across Borders. Marlene Epp. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2023, 304 pages.

Epp, a former history professor at Conrad Grebel University College, explores the diverse world of "Mennonite food," arguing that religion and culture are intertwined, and that food is about identity, whatever a Mennonite's heritage. Although there are a few recipes, this is not a cookbook, but a reflection on how Mennonites have interacted with food.

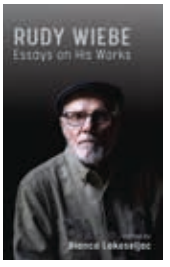
The Four Horsemen. Mark Reimer. Privately published with FriesenPress, 2021, 212 pages.

This first novel by Mark Reimer of Manitoba tells the story of a Mennonite pastor's family struggling to cope with challenging family dynamics. He raises questions about the belief that Christians should be stoic and not lament when bad things happen because it is all part of God's divine plan.



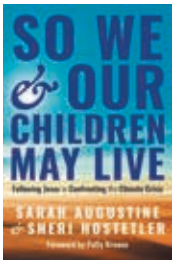
Pinching Zwieback: 20 Fresh-Baked Stories. Mitchell Toews. At Bay Press, 2023, 400 pages.

The author grew up in Steinbach, Manitoba, and these stories are a form of fictionalized autobiography. While the short stories are not based on specific happenings, they provide insight into Mennonite life.



Rudy Wiebe: Essays on His Works. Bianca Lakoseljac ed. Guernica Editions Inc., 2023, 375 pages.

Among the Canadian writers and academics who contributed to this collection of essays are Margaret Atwood, Miriam Toews, Hildi Froese Tiessen, Paul Tiessen, and John Longhurst. The editor, a writer from Ontario, put together this tribute to Rudy Wiebe because she found his writing life-changing.



So We and Our Children May Live: Following Jesus in Confronting the Climate Crisis. Sarah Augustine and Sheri Hostetler. Herald Press, 2023, 200 pages.

Because of the climate crisis, we need to shift our attitudes, say these authors. Even with green energy, our capitalist economy is not sustainable, and we need to stop extracting minerals from the earth. If we follow Jesus honestly, we can build climate justice.

Resources

Conform: the Mennonite Migration to Mexico of the 1920s. Andrew Wall. Refuge 31 Films and Plett Foundation, 2023, 55-minute documentary.

Using the voices of Mennonite historians, this documentary tells the story of the Mennonites who arrived in Manitoba in the 1870s and the reasons why many of them left for Mexico in the 1920s. It is available on Youtube.

Many of the featured titles on the book list are available for purchase or to borrow from CommonWord Book Store and Resource Centre in Winnipeg. For more information, see www.commonword.ca or call 204-594-0527 or 1-877-846-1593.

CommonWord
Bookstore and Resource Centre

Mennonite Church B.C.'s annual women's retreat drew 54 women to Camp Squeah on October 20 to 22. The theme was "Planted, rooted, growing in Christ," and the speaker was Bonnie Esau of Chilliwack. Esau related stories of gardening and family life to the theme. Women from various denominations attended.

Calendar

British Columbia

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 p.m.; Film/Presentations at 3 p.m.; Faspa at 4 p.m. For tickets call: 604-853-6177 or online: www.mhsbc.com.

Manitoba

Nov. 15: Local Authors Night at the Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, Manitoba. Join host Nita Wiebe with Mitchell Toews ("Pinching Zwieback") and authors: Elma Koop ("The Little Pioneer"), Noreen Jantzen ("I Wondered as I Wandered: Memoirs and History, Lawrence Klippenstein"), and Mary-Lou Driedger ("Sixties Girl"). Music and refreshments available.
Nov. 24, 25: Prepare to embark on an unforgettable musical voyage this November as Incantatem proudly presents "PIRATES! Musical Mayhem, an Incantatem Extravaganza." From 7 to 9:30 pm, witness a captivating fusion of nerdy fandom melodies, ranging from the iconic tunes of "Pirates of the Caribbean" to the enchanting world of the video game "Portal." Held at John Black Memorial United Church, this concert promises two nights of high-energy performances, where an ensemble of talented musicians and actors will transport the audience to the heart of thrilling pirate adventures.
Dec. 17: Join the Faith and Life Women's Chorus and the Faith and Life Male Choir as they share Christmas music and invite you into singing some of our favourites, at Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.

Ontario

Nov. 11: MCEC Equipping Day, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., East Zorra Mennonite Church, Tavistock, Ont. A day for pastors, chaplains, congregational leaders and all who are interested to talk about green funerals, funeral planning, advanced care planning, MAID (Medical assistance in dying) and palliative care.
Nov. 16: "I Love You and It Hurts," Theatre of the Beat presents three short plays on abuse and family violence, at Preston Mennonite Church in Cambridge, at 7 p.m.
Nov. 18: The MCC Peace Conference is your chance to see, hear and experience first-hand how you and MCC are changing lives and communities through peacebuilding. This event will inspire and inform through general sessions, workshops and conversations with messengers of peace. Visit mcc.org/peace-conference for more details.s
Nov. 22: Rockway Mennonite Collegiate invites you to their Annual General Meeting at 7:30 pm. Back by popular demand, this meeting will be online. To receive the Zoom link, please email AGM@rockway.ca. For membership information, visit www.rockway.ca.
Nov. 24, 25: The Church at Nairn (formerly Nairn Mennonite Church) 26459 Bear Creek Rd, Ailsa Craig (Nairn) annual Spirit of Christmas Fri Nov 24th 6:30-9, Sat Nov 25 10-4 p.m. Includes live music, juried crafts, pottery, greeting cards, wood products, stained glass, vinyl signs, quilts and more. Tea room included with admission. Info@nairnmennonite.weebly.ca.
Nov.25: Grebel is home to a vibrant residence and academic community made up of students across all faculties and programs at the University of Waterloo. Prospective students, families, and teachers are invited to visit Grebel to meet current students, staff, and faculty to learn about the residence and academic programs. Learn about student life at the University of Waterloo and tour the wider campus. Register in advance and receive information on in-person sessions, presentations, and how to plan your time on campus. uwaterloo.ca/grebel/fall-open-house-2023.
Nov. 25: All are invited to enjoy a three-choir extravaganza at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church at 7:30 p.m. The Music Department at Grebel has commissioned two alumni composers to celebrate Grebel's 60th Anniversary. The new pieces will be premiered on November 25th at a joint choral concert featuring the Conrad Grebel Chapel Choir, the UW Chamber Choir and the University Choir.
Nov. 26: Fall Concert of the Soli Deo Gloria Singers at 3 p.m. at Leamington United Mennonite Church. Donations are welcome.
Dec. 10: Menno Singers and the 225-voice Mennonite Mass Choir perform Handel's Beloved "Messiah" at Centre in the Square with Artistic Director Brandon Leis. Tickets at the Centre in the Square Box Office. www.centreinthesquare.com.

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

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

Classifieds

Employment Opportunities

Mennonite Collegiate Institute is seeking a term High School Science Teacher from February to June of the 2023–2024 school year with potential permanent status.

Instruction areas include Grade 10 Science, Grade 11 Biology, Grade 12 Physics, Grade 12 Chemistry.

Successful candidates must hold a valid Manitoba Teachers Certificate or have a Bachelor of Science degree to be able to apply for a Limited Teaching Permit.

Contact principal Jennifer Klippenstein at jenniferklippenstein@mciblues.net to apply.

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

Conrad Grebel University College at the University of Waterloo is hiring a Director of Operations. The Director of Operations is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the College's physical plant, information technology systems, human resources, food and hospitality services, security and safety, and front office and reception. The successful candidate will have a bachelor's degree, along with training and experience in the areas of business or personnel management, human resources, facilities management, and information technology. At least five years of management experience is preferred, ideally in a post-secondary institution. Applications will be reviewed beginning November 20, 2023.

Grebel respects, appreciates, and encourages diversity. Canadian citizens and permanent residents will be given priority. For further information about the College, department, position description, and application procedures, visit: uwaterloo.ca/grebel/careers

CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

First-hand from Gaza

The following is a string of messages received by a reader of *Canadian Mennonite* who worked in Israel-Palestine. She received the messages on October 30 from a friend in Gaza who lost 19 family members in the bombing two days before. The person has two pre-school sons and is now sheltering in a UN school. Names are withheld for security reasons. Used with permission.

I'm really so worry
See die all the time
They all the time do bombing
I'm not sleep
Worry
What I do?
I'm not see news say for stop war.

My dream see war stop
And really I hope next war if me not die
Leave…me and my sons

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS PHOTO BY APAIMAGES

Palestinians inspect the ruins of Aklouk Tower, destroyed in Israeli airstrikes in Gaza City.