

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

November 17, 2023 Volume 27 Number 23

A photograph of a woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing black-rimmed glasses and a patterned scarf. She is smiling broadly and wearing a light-colored sweater. The background is a blue-grey wall with horizontal lines.

# Called to the work of the church

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# Call and promise

WILL BRAUN

editor@canadianmennonite.org

“I will give you shepherds after my own heart who will lead you with knowledge and understanding.”

This is God’s beautiful promise in Jeremiah. Indeed, we need shepherds after God’s heart.

In our feature, Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe shares the experiences of three young women who have heeded the call to pastoral work (page 7). These women serve to fulfill part of God’s ancient, ongoing promise.

Their stories point to the communal nature of call and promise. The affirmation of the community was essential for these shepherds to hear and heed the call. The divine promise is then fulfilled, in part, through the affirmation of the community.

Look around you. Scan the horizon for people with gifts to be affirmed, callings to be revealed, passions in need of soil in which to grow.

For those who have discerned and responded to a call, of whatever sort, I offer a teaching shared with me by the late Gene and Mary Herr, important elders in my life. They said we do well to live between call and promise.

If God calls us, God offers a promise to go with that call. We do not fulfill a call on our own, or just with community; we live into divine promise. We surrender to divine promise. The work is God’s. The outcome is assured.

On pages 20 and 21, we offer a path into Advent. I never got Advent

as a kid. It seemed like random, generic themes, such as joy and hope, melded, by use of cliché and candles, into something awkwardly approximating ritual. That’s harsh, but it was my experience. I didn’t see the distinctive nature of the season.

Now I experience Advent as a time of waiting, of winter fallow, of the quiet dark before the daybreak from on high that will visit us, as Zechariah proclaims in relation to the coming Messiah during the first Advent.

Of course, the calm and quiet nature of Advent must withstand the bluster of pre-Christmas activity and pressure that turn the holy into the hectic. This brings me to another lesson of the Herrs, particularly Mary. She would gently encourage people to excise the word “busy” from their vocabulary.

Try it this Advent.

“Are you keeping busy?”

“Actually I’m having a great week; it’s been wonderful to . . .”

You don’t have to lie, just redirect, re-orient. Wean yourself of the presumed importance that comes with the term “busy.” Advent is for the humble servant of the Lord.

I also see Advent on pages 16 and 17. As fall turns to winter, Theo Wiederkehr reads Genesis in his root cellar, where the potential for new life rests, waiting in the dark for the daybreak.

Protected by a sort of kohlrabi covenant, select root vegetables lie dormant, protected, to be planted in spring to bear seeds in their second year, as is their way. The plants, then, will die, but the seeds will carry on.

I’m not equating kohlrabi with Jesus, or the Wiederkehr’s root cellar with Mary’s womb, but the earthy, dark season of waiting is the mystery of Advent.

This is also the season of great darkness in Gaza, the West Bank and Israel. This Christmas, Bethlehem will again be under brutal occupation, not unlike the first Christmas.

On the back cover are the words of Munther Isaac, a Palestinian pastor speaking raw truths about the faith crisis of his people. The comments come from a November 3 web event, hosted by Sabeel, an organization well known to Mennonites, that offered the most compelling words I have heard or read in some time.

Finally, let me circle back to the feature about young pastors. One of the pastors quoted in that piece, along with two others, will be part of “Answering the Call,” a November 29 *Canadian Mennonite* online event. For more, see the yellow ad on page 28 or [canadianmennonite.org/events](http://canadianmennonite.org/events).

I must also note that the feature marks Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe’s final contribution to *Canadian Mennonite* in the role of Manitoba correspondent, a position she has held for six years.

During that time, Nicolien wrote 254 articles. We thank her for her dedication, skill and keen attention to church happenings in Manitoba. We wish her the very best. ☸



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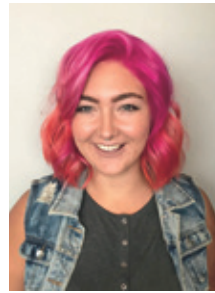
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# CANADIAN MENNONITE

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### Biblical binge

Filmmaker Dallas Jenkins wanted people to be able to “binge-watch” a show about Jesus. The result—a TV series called “The Chosen”—is now in its fourth season, boasting over 600 million views. The show bills itself as a “historical drama based on the life of Jesus, seen through the eyes of those who knew him.”

Source: Wikipedia, thechosen.tv



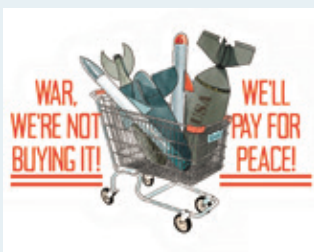
### Religious festival creates toxic haze

Following a night of religious celebration, residents of Delhi, India, woke up to air pollution levels categorized by authorities as “severe.” Despite a ban, residents lit firecrackers to celebrate Diwali, the festival of light. The firecrackers exacerbated already high levels of air pollution.

Source: BBC



FLICKR PHOTO BY GENERALISING



GRAPHIC BY JESSE GRABER

### Bang for the buck

In 2022, the average U.S. taxpayer spent US\$2,375 on the military, \$1,087 of which went to military contractors. “Paying taxes that support war and militarism—often at a higher rate than we give to our church budgets—affects our faith,” says Harold A. Penner, a long-time war tax resister within Mennonite Church USA.

Source: MC USA

## 50 YEARS AGO

### Defusing bombs: A witness for peace

Saigon, Vietnam — Exploratory work in the countryside of Vietnam to find ways to help local farmers clear their land of unexploded bombs will begin in October. Mennonite Central Committee second-term volunteers Earl and Pat Martin, Paoli, Pa., will do initial research.

...

At the present Earl's work will involve research rather than actual detonation. Ordnance disposal requires six or seven months of specialized training. However, the Martins, who have a daughter, Lara Mai, gave a great deal of consideration to the possibility of a family person being involved in high risk work.

“We are ready to follow this road wherever it leads,” the Martins concluded. “The question is bound to come up: Don't you love your family? Don't you have any feeling of responsibility for your child? It is here we believe the crux of the issue lies.

“We are child not only to our parents, but to all parents. We are mother and father not only to Lara but to all children. If anyone is threatened by unexploded ordnance in the fields and gardens of Vietnam, that person is our child, that person is our brother, our sister, our mother, our father. No person's life is more or less dispensable than another person's.”

MENNONITE REPORTER, OCTOBER 29, 1973



### Chaplain General clamps down on religion

Canada's Chaplain General issued a directive that effectively prohibits military chaplains from using overtly religious language or wearing religious symbols at public events. The Chaplain General then paused the directive after significant outcry.

Source: Catholic Register

Photo: Corporal Eric Chaput, Canadian Armed Forces



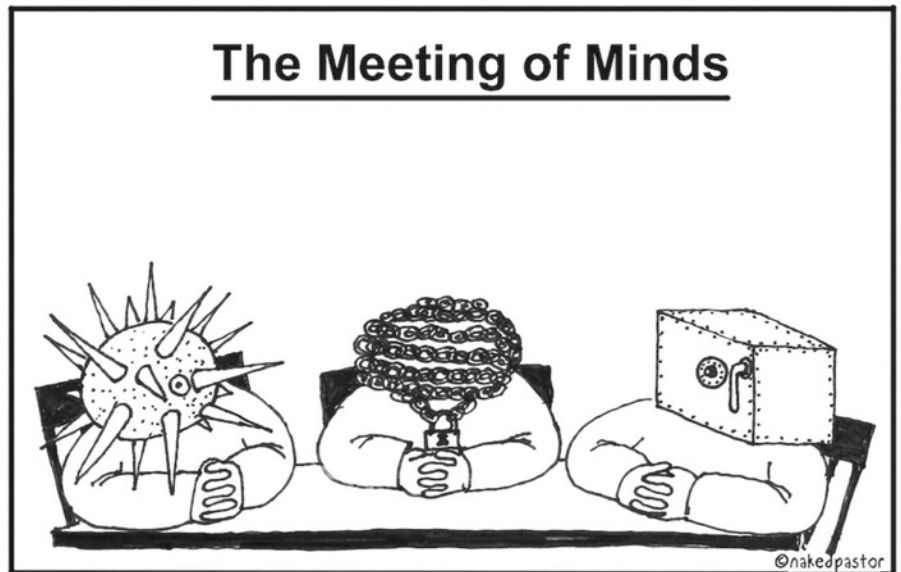


FLICKR PHOTO BY FRANCESCO SCAGLIONI

## Kenya marks national tree-planting holiday

Every Kenyan was asked to plant two tree seedlings on November 13, a national holiday set aside for that purpose. The government provided 150 million seedlings, as part of its goal of planting 15 billion trees by 2032. Ironically, the government recently lifted a ban on logging in certain areas.

Source: CNN, BBC



## A moment from yesterday



In 1975 the Conference of Mennonites in Canada built the chapel at Canadian Mennonite Bible College (now CMU). Rudy Friesen wrote in the *Mennonite Mirror*, April 1975, page 7: "It was agreed that the chapel should be simple and unadorned, yet strong and bold. . . . The large barn-like trusses on the inside continue this feeling of strength, and as such form the only decoration. To express man's impurity, the geometric pureness of the box is disrupted at its southwest corner where an angled skylight provides sunshine to the interior. . . . Therefore, both inside and out, this building is honest in its expression, contemporary in its use of materials, bold in its form, yet humble in its feeling."

Text: Conrad Stoesz

Photo: Canadian Mennonite Bible College

## /// Readers write

### ✉ Clarification

**Dying With Dignity Canada would like to add to and clarify some of the information shared in Conrad Brunk's letter to the editor ("Readers write," November 3).**

In the Government of Canada's 2022 annual report on medical assistance in dying (MAID), it was reported by clinicians that 77.6 percent of patients who received MAID also received palliative care. Of the MAID recipients who did not receive palliative care (19.6 percent), 87.5 percent were reported to have had access to these services.

There are rigorous criteria and safeguards throughout the MAID assessment process, and ultimately the choice of an assisted death is about compassion, avoiding suffering and the fundamental rights of an individual.

HELEN LONG, CEO, DYING WITH DIGNITY CANADA

## /// Online comments

### ✉ An essential Sunday

**Eternity Sunday is a Sunday I try not to miss as well ("Holy moments in the midst of grief," November 3).** It's a chance to look back on the year, to remember those in our lives who have gone and recognize the difference they've made.

LINDA WIEBE DICKINSON



SUPPLIED PHOTO

*Mennonite youth gathering in Myanmar, April 2023.*

### ✉ Profound narrative

**Jeanette Hanson's profound narrative showcases the essence of meaningful collaboration in global church missions ("A plastic chair partnership," June 30).**

The simplicity of providing chairs and lights for the Mennonite youth peace conferences in Myanmar reflects a

deeper partnership in fostering peace, mentorship and spiritual guidance. It emphasizes that true collaboration isn't merely about material contributions but also shared values and collective efforts in advancing God's work.

Hanson's perspective beautifully underscores the intricate connections and relationships that weave together to support vital initiatives. Her account invites reflection on the diverse forms of support that contribute to a unified mission of peace and understanding.

CARRIE WANG

## /// Milestones

### Deaths

**Claassen**—Anneliese, 92, (b. Dec. 11, 1931; d. Sept. 25, 2023), Lethbridge Mennonite Church, Lethbridge Alta.

**Cressman**—Christine, 64 (b. March 18, 1959; d. Oct. 20, 2023). Nith Valley Mennonite Church, New Hamburg, Ont.

**Cressman**—Elaine, 89 (b. Apr. 8, 1934; d. Oct. 15, 2023). Nith Valley Mennonite Church, New Hamburg, Ont.

**Froese**—Linda Helen, 64, (b. Apr. 13, 1959; d. Sept. 15, 2023), Sherbrooke Mennonite Church, Vancouver, B.C.

**Harms**—Archie, 89, (b. Apr. 18, 1934; d. July 28, 2023), Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Waterloo, Ont.

**Heidebrecht**—Anny (nee Friesen), 101, (b. Oct. 8, 1922; d. Oct. 30, 2023), Calgary First Mennonite Church, Calgary, Alta.

**Janzen**—Arlene, 67, (b. Nov. 7, 1956; d. Nov. 13 2023), Rosthern Mennonite Church, White City, Sask.

**Rempel**—Alvena (nee Temoshawsky), 85, (b. Jan. 3, 1938; d. Oct. 15, 2023), Nutana Park Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, Sask.

**Sawatsky**—Ernst (Ernie), 90, (b. Aug. 13, 1933; d. Oct 16, 2023), Lethbridge Mennonite Church, Lethbridge, Alta.

**Wieler**—Elenore, 70, (b. Apr. 29, 1953; d. Nov. 1, 2023); First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man.

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- Please keep it concise and respectful. Any substantial edits to letters will be done in consultation with the writer.
- If you have feedback not intended for publication, please contact [editor@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:editor@canadianmennonite.org) or at 1-800-378-2524 ext 5.

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

# Called to the work of the church

Despite all odds, young women hear a clear call to ministry

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe  
Manitoba Correspondent

It might seem unlikely that young women would be drawn to church leadership and feel compelled to enter pastoral ministry. As young people, they are part of an underrepresented demographic in the church, one that is leaving organized religion in increasing numbers. As women, they have been barred for generations from leadership roles in the church and turned away from the pulpit.

Yet the voices of young female pastors in Manitoba keep surfacing.

“I feel very confident that I feel called to be a pastor, yet I couldn’t tell you exactly what that means or what that looks like,” says Kennedy Froese, associate pastor at Sterling Mennonite Fellowship in Winnipeg. For Froese, part of being called is feeling “a deep love for the church despite all its deep flaws.” Another part is the affirmation of others. “People in my life have told me I have gifts and I should use that deep love to care for the church as a pastor.”

Many young people are not hearing, or heeding, a call like this. Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) is decreasing the number of biblical and theological studies (BTS) courses required for an undergraduate degree and is maintaining a smaller BTS faculty than previous years. Karen Schellenberg, co-director of leadership ministries with Mennonite Church Manitoba, has heard from pastors across the country that many Christian universities are experiencing the same thing.

## Selenna Wolfe

“I think our generation needs more of the encouragement from other people, and the voice needs to be louder than it may have been in the past in order for people to hear the call,” says Selenna Wolfe, associate



PHOTO BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

## Selenna Wolfe

pastor at Hope Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.

The 28-year-old views the concept of calling as “a combination of personal interest and skill and affirmation from others.” She says it’s not necessarily a direct

call from God. “I do think God can speak to us, but in my experience it’s more [the] things in life that I think you can interpret as a call from God.”

Her community’s feedback was formative for her own journey to ministry. While studying at CMU, she participated twice in the ministry inquiry retreat. It’s a weekend that brings students interested in ministry together with experienced pastors and CMU faculty for worship, reflection and mentorship. “I felt really affirmed by professors there and their guest speakers,” Wolfe says.

When she was 12 years old, living in Steinbach, Manitoba, Wolfe witnessed the ordination of a female pastor. She remembers thinking, “I’m going to do that one day.”

People continued to remind her of her calling and reaffirm it while she worked at summer camp. She especially loved being the Bible instructor.

### Valerie Alipova

External affirmation was also important for Valerie Alipova. While doing a pastoral internship at Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, a congregant said to her: “I hope I will still be alive to see you be a pastor here one day.” Alipova says, “the calling from my community felt like a divine intervention.”

Alipova, 27, is from Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine. She came to Canada in 2015 for a voluntary service program, staying afterwards for education and then permanently moving here. Growing up, she didn’t think she would be a pastor. Her mom is a lay minister, and like a lot of kids, she didn’t want to follow in the exact same footsteps as her parents. She saw over the years, though, that she had gifts for ministry—leading summer camps, connecting well with people, striving to learn more about faith.

But without community encouragement, she may not have ever explored those gifts as a vocation. “I have a lot of feelings, so I’m not sure

I can always trust them all,” Alipova says. “If I didn’t have that support, I’m not sure those feelings [of calling] would have been confirmed because of



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Valerie Alipova



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Kennedy Froese

all the ideas of what the perfect pastor looks like.”

Besides her mother, almost all the pastors she encountered in Ukraine were old men. Even the young pastors, of which there were few, were some version of the idealized male youth pastor who plays guitar. Add to that, moving to Canada with a foreign language and culture, and she didn’t imagine she’d fit as a pastor here.

When Alipova was a student, she was able to use her gifts and test out pastoral ministry through Mennonite Central Committee’s Summerbridge program, an 8- to 12-week opportunity for young adults of diverse cultural backgrounds to do a paid internship in their home congregation. She did the program twice, both times at Bethel. She faced challenges but found the work gave her energy, and she received continual affirmation.

Bethel has a history of having female pastors, Alipova says, and she even got to work on a pastoral team of all women for some of the past several years. It has helped her feel that she deserves to be there. “I see the hard work of women before me that have laid that path for me to enter this position without fighting for my right,” she says.

### Kennedy Froese

Froese says her path differs from that of a lot of women. Froese, 28, grew up near Elm Creek, Manitoba, and attended Elm Creek Mennonite Brethren Church. After high school, she attended a Southern Baptist Bible school in Texas. She returned thinking her feelings of being called to ministry must be God giving her a sign not to judge other people’s callings, rather than an actual call for her to go into ministry. “I felt my call when I didn’t think women could be pastoral leaders,” Froese says.

When she returned to Winnipeg, she started attending Fort Garry Mennonite Brethren Church and met Janessa Nayler-Giesbrecht, one of the



church's pastors at the time. Nayler-Giesbrecht invited her to be a youth leader, and the two had long conversations about women in ministry and deconstructing faith.

In the span of a month, each of Froese's parents asked if she would consider being a pastor, without knowing the other had asked. Then, when Froese made an off-hand comment about not being a pastor to her aunt, her aunt replied, "why not?" Froese says, "That melted my brain. I'd never been asked why I'm *not* a pastor."

When she reconnected with the pastor of her home church at a conference, he asked if she wanted to fill an interim pastor position for the summer. She ran the summer youth program and preached her first sermon. "That was the first time I let myself believe I could do it for a job," she says. She switched from studying library sciences to biblical and theological studies at CMU.

### Fear and affirmation

Wolfe says she was scared by stories of other women who felt called to ministry but could not find jobs. Froese and Alipova know stories like this too—a woman who completed her master's degree and had her gifts affirmed by someone in leadership, only to wait endlessly to hear back, with no result. Another pastor felt a strong calling but had to spend half her lifetime tackling obstacles to get there.

As Wolfe searched for work, prior to landing her role at Hope, her anxiety about struggling as a woman in ministry was further heightened by the fact that she is also queer. "I still felt called, but I felt like the politics of it all would get in the way." But as the views of more churches shifted, her hopes increased.

Now, she is studying clinical pastoral education to become a chaplain, while pastoring.

Schellenberg is seeing a lot more young women entering ministry in Mennonite Church Manitoba than young men. This is partly because some women pastors from the Mennonite

Brethren conference have switched to MC Manitoba.

She has also heard from several middle-aged and older women who felt called when they were young but either dismissed it or did not pursue it because there were no examples to follow. "Some of the barriers have been lifted and people are responding," she says. "You don't get uncalled. You can refuse it, but I think you can expect it may come around again."

In her case, Schellenberg heard the call when she was 40. Her congregation was searching within its own body for someone who could lead. "For me personally it was an almost audible feeling, a nudge from God," she says. She had already been serving the church in a lot of volunteer pastoral capacities, but this call felt more specific, "like this was definitely mine to do."

### Calling

Froese said she has rarely heard other young people in MC Canada circles use the language of calling, in contrast to her more evangelical circles. Alipova agrees—if a pastor doesn't connect

with their youth individually, they might not hear from youth who are interested in pastoral ministry because they're too scared or embarrassed to mention it in a group.

Froese speaks freely and deeply about her calling. "My faith and my calling feel very personal, very tied to my experiences of who I am," she says. "I could cry thinking about the church and that I get to be a pastor."

For Froese, calling goes beyond reason. "Sometimes I feel like MC Manitoba moves into rational headspace and is uncomfortable with deeply emotional spiritual experiences," she says. "I like my emotions and that they connect me with God. Calling feels emotional . . . it's not practical, there's no logic there . . . but I feel it deeply."

Not all calling happens this way, nor does it need to. People should be open to all the ways God might call, Schellenberg says. "Maybe that call from God has to come in a way that God knows you will hear it . . . I just think God meets us where we're at, with our language." ❧

### For discussion

1. Have you ever felt a nudge from God? How would you describe it?
2. How important is it for a pastor to feel a sense of call from God and/or other people?
3. What is the role of congregational leaders and lay people in helping young people discern a call to ministry?
4. Selenna Wolfe, who is 28, says her generation "needs more of the encouragement from other people, and the voice needs to be louder than it may have been in the past, in order for people to hear the call." Do you agree? If so, why might this be?
5. What do you make of the fact that Canadian Mennonite University is reducing its biblical and theological studies faculty while young women are being called to pastoral ministry?

—By Barb Draper

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## OPINION

## FROM OUR LEADERS

## Vignettes from the waiting room

Anna-Lisa Salo

**“H**ow do you like my gown? Don't I wear it well?”  
“You look amazing!”

Smoothing the creases of her gown, she flutters her eyelids, strikes a pose, and smiles with the confidence and sass of a runway model.

“I'm not going in there with you.”

“I know. When you hear me scream you can come and get me.”

The waiting room erupts with laughter. A release, an exhale. Satisfied, she pivots and follows the nurse into the abyss.

An awkward silence descends in the waiting room.

As I wait for my friend, I notice a couple sitting side by side across from me. Which one is the cancer patient, I wonder.

Then I see it. That healthy head of long, dark hair has shifted ever so slightly, betraying the woman's condition. Her hands are held tightly together between her knees as if in prayer. They exchange a few quiet words. I find myself longing to speak words of assurance and courage, but they get caught in my throat. Here, words are little comfort.

An awkward silence descends in the waiting room.

A woman enters bearing a large, canvas tote bag filled with diversions. Knitting needles pierce a ball of yarn waiting to be shaped and named. Noticing me feigning unusual interest in a print on the wall, she sparks a conversation.

“I like that picture.”

Unable to perceive anything remotely interesting in the print, I reply, “It's an original print. I've looked but I don't see a signature.”

“They're painting the halls in my condo,” she continues. “They're taking forever. I thought they'd use a lighter colour to brighten up the hallways, but

they painted everything this horrible grey. It's awful.”

“Yeah. That's the trend now,” I respond. “A friend of mine hates that colour. The name he uses for it is drywall.”

We laugh.

“I thought about rebelling and painting my door bright red.”

“Are you allowed?”

“I don't know, but I'd like to.”

“What colour are the other doors?”

“White.”

“Too bad. You should so paint your door red!”

Again, that awkward silence comes over the waiting room.

I am not a radiation therapist or oncologist. I know nothing about the complexities of radiation therapy or the nature of photons, protons or electrons. But I do know the smell of fear.

Try as we may to cover it up with humour or small talk, the force of fear becomes too much, like the sea pressing in on a dike. Weary with the constant effort of holding fast, the dike eventually gives way and the sea rushes in.

Repeatedly, we read the words “Fear not” in the Bible. Seems we humans have a propensity to fear. Enemies abound, looking for blood, leaving us exposed, helpless, and vulnerable. We do everything in our power to numb or avoid these feelings, building walls that hold back the flood.

Jesus knew fear. It stalked him in the garden. It descended on him like darkness. His anguished prayer, “*remove this cup from me*” (Luke 22:42), is heart-wrenching.

Rather than stoically managing fear alone, how can we face our fears together?



UNSPLOSH PHOTO BY GREG ROSENKE

As I sat in that waiting room, I wondered: rather than congratulating people on how brave, strong or courageous they are, perhaps we can be a safe space where together we can fall to our knees, cry out to God and allow our carefully constructed walls to crumble.

Perhaps we begin this journey of holding space for each other, like Jesus, by acknowledging fear rather than denying it. Perhaps it begins by reaching across the chasm of awkward silence that separates us and speaking these simple words:

“I'm scared.”

“I know. I'm scared too.” ✎

*Anna-Lisa Salo is the pastor of Bergthal Mennonite Church in Didsbury, Alberta.*

## IN THE IMAGE

# Acknowledging outrage, stepping toward love

Ed Olfert

I've spent the past weeks sifting through the rhetoric that is being used to describe the Israel-Hamas conflict, and it's been confusing, to say the least. At the time of this writing, officials say that more than 10,000 Gazans are dead.

As vested interests try to control the narrative, try to justify, try to capture global opinions and emotions, I'm further conflicted by various stories that rise up from my own past. These stories try to guide me to a personal response but mostly end up in a vat of confusion.

Is there any learning that I can tease from it all?

In 1993, I travelled with Community Peacemaker Teams (CPT) to Haiti. The country was engaged in a bitter and bloody upheaval, and CPT offered a nonviolent presence to harsh realities, while trying to raise global awareness of rampant injustice.

I was part of a small team assigned to a rural village with the mandate to see and to be seen. We spent time with the village priest, who was deemed at risk. We spent time in the village market, noting happenings there.

One day, we encountered a group of armed men in uniforms who were assaulting a captive. We approached. One of the aggressors turned to us, thrust his rifle into our faces, screamed and gestured for us to move on.

In the decades I've had to dissect those traumatic seconds, it seems clear that peacemaking that feels genuine must acknowledge the reality of the man with the rusty old gun, as well as



UNSPLASH PHOTO BY CHUTTERSNAPE

the man receiving the brunt of the violence. Somehow, my energy and my compassion must be available to both.

A decade later, I found myself in Winnipeg, engaged in non-violence training organized by CPT. After several weeks of intense sessions, I learned that our final day was to be spent at the Manitoba legislature, protesting a hydro project in northern Manitoba which seemed at odds with the wishes of the communities that surrounded it.

Again, I was conflicted. My involvement felt artificial to me. I was from another jurisdiction and I was not a taxpayer in the province. I had done no independent research and had spent no time gazing into faces, building relationships and listening to different perspectives. To their credit, CPT handlers created a role that I could enter with integrity.

These days, I scroll through the contact list on my phone and note the names of released offenders that appear there. There are dozens. They are my friends. I'm reminded that in 35 years of

walking in that community, the most effective way I've found to help in rebuilding lives—the most effective way of contributing to community safety—is simply to offer relationships.

When a broken person dares to engage the concept that they are worthy of relationship, they begin to live into that reality. The vulnerable can claim a larger slice of who they are called to be, and the world gets a little less violent.

Additionally, I get some really cool friends who have walked roads that I have not and who tell stories I wouldn't otherwise hear.

These disjointed glimpses flicker through my mind like a century-old film clip. It seems that every situation of violence—whether overt or covert, whether physical or emotional—hides within untruth. I think of the Russia-Ukraine debacle, of warring factions in Africa, of violence that happens closer to home.

How have I prepared myself to walk past the headlines screaming for my outrage? How will I save some of that emotional energy for compassion, for looking into faces, for listening, for affirming? How can we, at whatever level is available, offer energy for healing?

These days challenge us to acknowledge our outrage and indignity, and then, hopefully, to step deliberately, creatively, toward love. ❧



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## MIND AND SOUL

# Can we talk about capitalism?

Randy Haluza-DeLay

**D**o you celebrate Buy Nothing Day? For me it's like a holy day, a short version of Lent—that disruption of the ordinary that makes me notice the taken-for-granted and the practices of the gospel.

The intent of Buy Nothing Day is that for a single day one does not purchase anything. No economic transactions. Live the day with whatever you have. Notice how it feels.

One year, I failed to plan and had to get to work without my car because it had no gas. I really noticed Buy Nothing Day that year!

The day began in 1992 as a form of “culture-jamming,” promoted by the non-profit magazine *Adbusters*. Buy Nothing Day takes place on the fourth Friday of November (November 24 this year), the day after Thanksgiving in the U.S. That day is also known as Black Friday, the traditional “kickoff” to the Christmas shopping season and the busiest shopping day of the year.

Having one day a year where some people choose not to buy anything doesn't much affect the economy. It might affect the neighbourhood coffee shop, so go back to the local shop more often and avoid the chains. Small businesses are better levers for local economies anyway.

Over the years, much of the blame for the commercialization of Christmas has been on individual consumerism. Consumers have choice for sure, which Buy Nothing Day highlights. But can we talk about capitalism itself?

This is risky terrain!

Capitalism is an ideology and a system. An ideology is a single-minded



UNSPLASH PHOTO BY DEBORA BACHESCHI

focus on whatever comes before the -ism. Capitalism puts accumulation of wealth at the centre of our social systems, with tax structures, education practices and social expectations in full support.

I'm not against the incentivization of risk-taking and business opportunities. Most of us hope for more money at the end of the year than in January. Still, this puts everyone on a competitive treadmill. It also misses the fact that none of us alone can do much to change things unless we choose to step outside of the system.

A capitalist system treats everything like a commodity. We have a housing affordability crisis because in

this system, a better business decision is to go for the higher profits of higher-end construction, unless construction is also motivated by other values.

Maybe you recall the phrase, “Live simply so that others can simply live.” It accurately recognizes that the global economy is interconnected and that the bulk of resources from the planet go to a minority of humanity.

What the phrase misses is that most economic activity is concentrated in the hands of relatively few people.

So, can we talk about capitalism? Can we talk about a system that emphatically produces winners and losers and obscene wealth concentration?

Can we implicate capitalism in draining resources from the earth? Can we highlight capitalism's role in global social inequality?

Peer-reviewed research shows that more money flows from the Global South to the North

than the reverse. That's a bad political economic system, a result of historical colonization and economic relations.

Can I call it an ungodly system? I confess that I benefit from it. Could it be that the capitalist economy is inconsistent with the grace of the gospel?

So, celebrate Buy Nothing Day this year. Make it a day of consumer fasting, reflection and prayer.

Plus, be peculiar and take a risk by talking about capitalism. ☿



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## TALES FROM THE UNENDING STORY

# My extended season of Advent

Joshua Penfold

**L**et all that has breath praise Yah. Hallelujah!” (Psalm 150:6)

This is the last verse in the book of Psalms, and it was the last verse I read to complete a more than five-year journey through the Hebrew scriptures (Old Testament).

It is wild for me to think about where this Bible reading challenge, given to me years ago by my pastor, has taken me. Since deciding to abandon my original “Bible in a Year” reading plan for a slower, more reflective and intentional pace, I’ve ended up writing just over 250 Facebook posts reflecting on my reading.

Those posts led to this column for *Canadian Mennonite*. Many of my reflections have also been the foundation for sermons I’ve preached over the years at different churches.

I have tried to balance being disciplined enough to read and reflect regularly while also not beating myself up for seasons of slacking (or maybe “slowing down” would be a more gracious term). I’ve usually only missed a couple days. Occasionally I’ve slacked for a few weeks, but I’ve never worried that I would drop it altogether.

As I’ve neared the end of the Hebrew scriptures over the last few months, I’ve had a growing excitement for reading the gospels and eventually the rest of the New Testament.

Reading almost exclusively from the Hebrew scriptures for five years has, in some ways, helped me appreciate the anticipation of Messiah. It feels like my reading has been an extended season of Advent, living in that space of waiting a little longer than the traditional one month in December each year (though still a minuscule time period when compared to how long Israel waited).

The Old Testament is wonderful, beautiful, strange, difficult and

deep with meaning and truth, but I’ve struggled with the violence and the vengeance. I’ve struggled with the way enemies are spoken of, the way women are spoken of, and, sometimes, the way God is spoken of.

I realize there’s a slew of reasons why this is so, and I acknowledge and appreciate them—sometimes I even understand them—but I can get tired of the hard work of reading and interpreting the Bible.

thinks the New Testament will be easier to read—nicer, cleaner, more peaceful, with fewer problematic verses—because Jesus is all about loving everyone, right?

But I know better. I know that reading the New Testament will present a whole new set of challenges: all the things Jesus teaches that I conveniently ignore, all the things I wish Paul didn’t say, all the teachings that threaten my comfortable, selfish life.



UNSPLASH PHOTO BY TIM WILDSMITH

At times I wish it was easier. I understand why people prefer to focus on the nice parts, like the first part of Psalm 149 (“Sing to the Lord a new song, His praise in the faithful’s assembly”) and ignore the more difficult passages, like the end of that same Psalm (“Exultations of God in their throat and a double-edged sword in their hand, to wreak vengeance upon the nations, punishment on the peoples . . .”).

There’s a naive part of me that

I hope that it won’t take me five years to read the New Testament. Ultimately, though, I’m happy with whatever pace I settle into, so long as I continue to engage meaningfully and the Spirit continues to meet me in my wrestling. ❧



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## GOD'S STORY, OUR STORY

# Part IV: Telling, re-telling, re-storying

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.**

**M**etaphors and images provide vivid word pictures which help God's people make meaning and make sense of a complex and changing context.

Jesus routinely drew upon the ordinary and mundane from his surroundings to teach rich spiritual truths. Metaphorically describing the kingdom of God, Jesus said the kingdom is like a mustard seed, a farmer who sowed some seed, a net, yeast and like a person who had a treasure hidden in a field.

The author of Acts likened the early church to "living stones" to communicate that the presence of God was no longer contained within the temple in Jerusalem, a central locale, but rather amongst and within the community of Jesus's followers.

Metaphors are a rich spiritual resource, useful for facilitating the imaginative and faithful work of journeying in an uncertain and unsettled time. Indeed, attentiveness to the metaphors we draw upon enables congregations to make connections between the biblical story and our communal and individual stories.

Overwhelmingly, pastoral colleagues describe their congregational or leadership "journey" metaphorically as

"wilderness wandering."

The major storyline of the Old Testament, as told in Exodus, involves the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery and their 40-year journey through the wilderness.

Recounting a painful episode as a "wilderness" experience has helped one congregation locate itself theologically and biblically within God's story, and experientially identify with God's people in a liminal moment across time and place.

Another pastor said, "When you first hit the wilderness, it's faster and easier to go back to the fleshpots of Egypt than it is to wait the 40 years and get to the promised land."

One colleague related "40 years in the wilderness" to their congregation's nearly 40-year building project process. He stated that after years of planning, preparation and anticipation, groundbreaking for construction occurred right at a time when attendance began to wane and younger people were saying they were not "really into an institutional church model."

Young adults were expressing that they preferred to give money to the poor and not to buildings and budgets. Subsequently, the "promised land" looked quite different from what was expected.

Wandering the wilderness is not a new experience for God's people but rather a recurring biblical theme in which the provision of God and the faithful presence of the divine is revealed. It is good spiritual work for a congregation to dig into and explore the metaphors and images that emerge.

Related to the wilderness, can a congregation identify where they experience God providing streams of water in the desert? How is the Spirit's sustaining and liberating power witnessed? What

spiritual growth or transformed congregational or individual identity can be identified for having journeyed through the wilderness?

Images beautifully articulate lived experience. One pastor described a particular congregational experience as "spiritual growth with our feet to the fire." While painful and challenging, the congregational spiritual growth had been rich.

Another colleague likened leadership amidst a changing context to "hiking at night with no flashlight." The pastor suggested he just happens "to be going first and stepping over things first." He cannot see any better than anyone else. Rather, he just happens to be out front.

The metaphors and images the church draws upon to help us understand and communicate our current context serve as a powerful eliciting technique in that they provide a common reference point for a faith community.

Not only do metaphors and images help us to challenge a current concern or context, but they are also a powerful tool that can help guide us into a wider space, providing language to reflect upon our lived experience.

The use of metaphors and images also enables the church to normalize what we are collectively experiencing, including naming our feelings. These feelings might include sadness, disorientation, frustration, fear and despair.

When imaginations are engaged, when word-pictures provide helpful language, and when limiting metaphors or images are identified, together God's people discover sacred ways to make the road while walking it. ❧

*Kara Carter is pastor of Wellesley Mennonite Church.*



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## STRENGTHENING FAMILY TIES THROUGH INTER-GENERATIONAL MEDIATION

## Part III: Succession

Cathrin van Sintern-Dick

John and Jean—not their real names—had long made plans to retire once John turned 65. They had dreams of travelling and spending more time with family, who lived far away. Plus, it simply was time to let go of their farm operation.

John's retirement was two years away. The farming operation was held jointly with John's brother, Pete, and Pete's wife, Petra.

John was 10 years older than Pete. Pete had known for years of John's plans, but neither had initiated a conversation until two years prior to

of retirement. Jean really wanted to have everything in place by John's 65th birthday. Two years before the retirement, they had the business appraised. From here on it was difficult to move forward. Pete was not sure how to finance the buyout. John and Jean looked on with frustration. They knew something had to happen.

The couples chose to enter a process of intergenerational mediation that involved succession planning. The mediator, a neutral third party, helped them express their hopes and concerns.

Since Pete and Petra's children were

bit too much and the other thinking they did not get quite enough. They reached a mutual agreement by the time John retired. Jean's wish came true.

And they were able to celebrate Christmas together, as they continue to do.

Not every family has the need for estate or succession planning. Still, they may benefit from planning for the future and having a conversation around hopes and fears which they see or perceive. Even if a monetary inheritance is small, there may be heirlooms

### Intergenerational mediators and succession planners can be important partners for promoting peace within families, creating transparent plans for the future

the planned retirement. John and Jean needed to sell their share of the farm, and they needed a certain amount to retire. Pete and Petra would need to buy them out and were unsure how to manage that financially.

All four of them knew one thing: At the end of it all they wanted to celebrate Christmas together.

The two couples had raised their families on the farm. It had provided summer jobs for their children and shared memories for everyone. Like many family-owned businesses, it was a source of pride and financial security for the family.

At the same time, a business such as this can be a source of conflict and tension during times of transition. Buyouts can be complicated. The next generation can have different views. Prospective successors may not have the financial means. Deep disagreements can arise.

John and Jean shared their intention

interested in joining the family business, the issue of succession planning was added to the buyout issue. The next owners, even if they had grown up within the business, needed training to take on the roles formerly filled by John and Jean. With the help of a succession planner, they identified necessary skills and knowledge to manage the business.

With the help of mediating third parties, the couples started to make progress. At times, it felt really slow, as if nothing was happening, while the retirement dateline loomed. Other times, positive movement was evident.

By that point, three families were working together. Through it, the families were able to maintain harmony. Neither of them walked away a winner or loser. One walked away thinking they paid a

that hold strong attachments.

Intergenerational mediators and succession planners can be important partners for promoting peace within families, creating transparent plans for the future and making sure families remain happy to celebrate together, whether the celebration is a retirement, Christmas or both. ❧



*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.*

## HUMANS AND HUMUS

## Consider the roots

Theo Wiederkehr



SUPPLIED PHOTO

*Detroit Dark Red beets, Chantenay Red carrots, Chieftain potatoes, Yukon Gold potatoes and Lowell Ewert's Jerusalem artichoke, all from the Wiederkehr garden.*

Over the past two months, our household has spent a lot of time preparing root crops for storage: digging, trimming the tops and packing them in boxes of dry leaves to go in the cellar. As we've worked with the autumnal flood of garlic, onions, potatoes, beets, kohlrabi, turnips, rutabagas, winter radishes, carrots, parsnips, leeks and the erroneously named Jerusalem artichoke, I've been considering what I can learn from the relationship between humans and roots.

Working with root crops involves trying to live in harmony with a place and other species. Some roots fulfill special functions in the garden. For example, beets and potatoes help control weeds. We can do less hoeing if we follow them in the garden rotation with crops that struggle more with weedy competition. Radishes and turnips for winter storage can be planted in early August, so we put them where we have just harvested dry peas,

filling a space that would otherwise sit neglected for the rest of the season.

Across Canada, root crops are by far the most efficient way to stay supplied with winter vegetables. Importing veggies, growing them in a greenhouse, or canning and freezing summer harvests all use a lot of energy and labour. Roots, by contrast, merely need us to regulate how much winter weather reaches them in a cold, humid storage space. Making roots a central element of our winter diet harmonizes their need to survive and our dietary needs with our region's climate.

Roots come from several plant families and are remarkably varied in flavour, texture and nutrient value. Most root plants follow a similar, sensible plan to survive the winter. As biennials, their natural pattern is to spend their first year growing and storing food in their roots; then they go dormant for the winter and wake up early in the spring to flower and produce more seed than they could if

they'd flowered in their first year.

Humans have developed a mutually beneficial partnership with them based on this rhythm. Our winters are too harsh for them to survive outdoors, so we contrive to make their winter slightly milder. A root cellar is ideal, but people have also stored roots in crawl spaces, under porches, in a mound covered with straw and earth, or in an old, unplugged fridge outside. (Note: garlic and onions are stored cool and dry, not cold and damp.) Since the roots are alive, they fend off spoilage and preserve themselves while waiting for spring. Then we cheat them and eat them.

### Inter-species covenant

I used to feel a bit guilty about deceiving my poor innocent roots, but in the last few years I've solved that problem in the obvious way: I save their seeds. For me, this work is a fulfillment of our mandate given at the start of Genesis. We acknowledge that humans



have a special power to understand what other species need, to alter their environment and to change them by selection—all cases of the sort of vice-regency described in Genesis 1. We also recognize that for us to survive, we must serve them and the ecosystems which support them as described in Genesis 2, creating conditions that allow them to thrive and reproduce. In this way, I see our relationship as a kind of inter-species covenant.

Like any covenant, saving biennial seed involves voluntarily limiting ourselves for the sake of a greater good. We have to exercise restraint and not eat all the food we have grown. Each autumn I sort out our most beautiful roots, pack them in their own special boxes, and tell my family that they must not eat them. I then defend them all winter against family members who don't read labels carefully.

I am sometimes bothered by sacrificing food for seed production. When this happens, I think about the gardeners before me who made this same sacrifice. I will never know their names or stories, but each carrot I eat is a gift from that long chain of people stretching back to when its species was

domesticated millennia ago on the far side of the Earth. It is humbling to join that chain of vital nameless people.

### Rooting responsibly

For me, developing this historical sense of my importance and unimportance, and of the inheritance I receive in the foods I eat, has naturally led me to consider what I want to pass on to future people. They won't remember my name, but whether I intend it or not, my actions will shape their lives in countless ways.

Some things I pass on will enrich their lives and increase the possibilities they have, as mine has been enriched by a gardener choosing to save seed from a particularly cold-tolerant leek, or someone teaching me that kohlrabi makes excellent coleslaw (add lots of parsley!). Other things I pass on, such as radish seed contaminated with a fungal disease, or a changed climate.

Not everyone has to save seed, but we all need to consider what parts of our heritage, both material and cultural, we want to maintain and pass on. As we live and develop that heritage, root vegetables have significant value, because they offer a way to live within the limits imposed by our

### How to enhance your relationship with roots

1. **Eat them.** Replace some out-of-season vegetables and fruits with roots. Develop culinary traditions which favour them. Pass on a boxful of root recipes to your grandchildren.
2. **Store them.** Find a place where you can store roots using natural cold and humidity. Acquire roots when they're harvested and store your own winter supply.
3. **Grow them.** If you have the means, grow some roots! They're easier than tomatoes.
4. **Save them.** Learn how to save seed for a biennial vegetable. Share your seed with other gardeners.

If you need help with any of these steps, write to me.

ecosystems and climate.

Our species doesn't like limits. However, our Earth is currently warning us that we are endangering ourselves by ignoring various natural limits. We insist on a year-round supply of many varieties of fresh fruits and vegetables. By depending on these foods, we demand long-distance shipping and high-energy storage. Roots, by contrast, are well suited for growing in most of Canada, can be stored with minimal energy inputs, and offer all the vitamins and minerals we seek from more exotic sources.

Choosing to get my vitamin C from turnips instead of oranges is a part of humbly adapting to my region, living up to the legacy I have received, and considering those who will come after me. ☸

*Theo Wiederkehr and his family pursue subsistence farming near Mildmay, Ontario. They write for Canadian Mennonite every second month, and can be reached at [rumithan@gmail.com](mailto:rumithan@gmail.com).*



*The Wiederkehr root cellar, 2023.*

SUPPLIED PHOTO

# Ten insights from CM's online event about MAID

By Aaron Epp  
Associate Editor

End-of-life care, current legislation and faith were the focus of an online panel discussion about medical assistance in dying (MAID) that *Canadian Mennonite* hosted last month.

The event included Lisa Heinrichs, a Master of Divinity student at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary who is specializing in chaplaincy; and Rhonda Wiebe, who has advocated as a member of the disability community for more than three decades.

Here are 10 insights from the October 25 discussion:

**“Each person’s situation [is unique].** In my second unit of [clinical psychospiritual education], I had a patient look me in the eyes and tell me that dying was the hardest thing he ever had to do. I realized in that moment that his experience was completely foreign to anything I’d ever known.” –Lisa

**“Right now, palliative care exists as a program, but it is not legislated.** And we know in times of medical scarcity that programs only anchored by policy change in a blink. Why is there nothing legally enshrining the right to palliative care but there’s legislation enshrining the right to MAID?” –Rhonda

**“The topic of MAID feels uncomfortable, and it should.** As a pacifist, I don’t think we should take the intentional ending of life lightly.” –Lisa

**“Many of us in the disability community . . . are already eligible for MAID.** That means every morning when we wake up, we must make a choice because it’s out there, just ready to be grasped. And when we experience shortages of life-sustaining medicine, lack of access to specialists and medical procedures, tremendous social devaluation, unsafe housing, poor or no community living supports, and other forms of explicit discrimination, you think



UNSPLASH PHOTO BY ANNIE SPRATT

about that choice. People with disabilities face much higher rates of poverty, unemployment, inadequate education, [lack of] accessible housing, [lack of] appropriate healthcare, and violence than non-disabled Canadians. Wouldn’t that make anyone think about suicide via MAID?” –Rhonda

**“My starting point tends to be: MAID is law.** This is the reality we’re facing. Where do we go from here? To put this theologically, as we experience the now and not yet of God’s kingdom, how do we extend Christ’s love and compassion while also advocating for justice in a broken world?” –Lisa

**“At the foundation of disability rights is this:** nothing about us without us.” –Rhonda

**“Adjusting to disability is hard.** It’s a pivot like no other, period. If you want to . . . be an inclusive community where people can work out those pivots together, look around you to see what’s blocking people’s access to appropriate healthcare or safe housing or pain control or safety or understanding social valuation and dignity. Otherwise, I would contend that MAID becomes the cheap thing rather

than the right thing to do.” –Rhonda

**“I recently led an adult Sunday school class at my church where we looked at multiple Bible verses about Jesus’s response to those who suffer.** Because after all, at the cornerstone of eligibility for MAID is the experience of unbearable suffering. So how does Jesus deal with those who suffer? And these were some of the themes we saw: He went and saw their pain. He had compassion. He moved toward their suffering. He stayed with them. He listened to them. He didn’t judge. He touched them. He prayed. And he met their spiritual, emotional and physical needs. . . . These are things that I think we as a church can keep in mind as we discuss MAID, as we discuss suffering and as we look to following Jesus in this world.” –Lisa

**“We have come from the mindset that your decisions are your own.** It’s up to you to make them. You have the right to make the decisions on your own. . . . In Indigenous cultures—and I wish I had an Indigenous friend to speak with us here tonight—you have the notion of the seven generations. The decision you make is a decision that honors your ancestors from seven generations back. And will it be a decision that can be understood and [be] helpful for people seven generations in front of you?” –Rhonda

**“I’ll mention one resource.** The Anglican Church has released . . . *In Sure and Certain Hope*. I found that was a really well-balanced examination of the topic. . . . Talking to people and hearing stories is really the best starting point. Putting faces to MAID, because it’s more than just an issue; it’s about people.” –Lisa ✎

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



# Practicing peace in a polarized world

*MCC Alberta holds first-ever peace conference*

Story and photo by Emily Summach  
Alberta Correspondent

**P**olarization was on the agenda as Mennonite Central Committee Alberta hosted its first-ever peace conference earlier this month.

Held November 3-4 in Calgary, “In Tune: Finding Harmony in a Polarized World” attracted participants from across denominational and professional lines.

“The idea for this conference came out of our world emerging from the pandemic,” said Ryan Siemens, MCC Alberta’s executive director. “We wanted to talk about polarization and how that’s impacted the church. We didn’t want to do something that was issue-based, but something that talked about the theory which could apply to all sorts of contexts.”

The first day of the conference was geared toward pastors and church leaders. Participants were invited to consider how centering their churches around Jesus can serve to counteract polarization in the pews.

Adam Dyer, executive director of the Jesus Collective, reminded participants that the church’s goal has never been to have everyone agree on everything.

“How can we become a church that can love the same-sex couple and the conservative couple—to become a space not of tolerance, but transformation?” Dyer asked. “There are aspects of Jesus that we can’t encounter without each other.”

In the afternoon session, Betty Pries, a specialist in mediation and conflict management, offered an introduction to what polarization is and how to welcome a both/and approach to divisive topics in churches and relationships.

The second day of the conference picked up a strong storytelling element as multiple speakers shared their personal experiences with overcoming polarization.

Ryan Dueck, pastor of Lethbridge

Mennonite Church, recounted his church’s 2015 experience of welcoming Syrian refugees to the community.

The congregation partnered with two other churches to sponsor a family. Shortly after starting the sponsorship process, the photo of a Syrian toddler’s body on a beach in Greece made news around the world.



**The two-day conference attracted participants from across denominational and professional lines.**

Dueck was inundated with calls from people wanting to help, and media outlets looking for comment. The sponsorship committee’s meetings typically drew six or seven people, but at the next meeting, more than 30 people showed up.

The outpouring of love and support brought Syrian families to Lethbridge, which Dueck describes as a “feel-good story.” The less feel-good part is that Dueck and his family received hate mail and threats of violence for his pro-refugee stance.

“I do this [welcome refugees] because it is my duty as a follower of Jesus Christ,” he said. “It’s our sacred duty to leave behind difference . . . God’s future has a right to make a demand on our present.”

The high point of the weekend was a fundraising event featuring Tareq Hadhad, a former Syrian refugee and

the CEO of Peace by Chocolate. More than 70 people attended the fundraiser, feasting on chocolate fondue and listening to Hadhad’s story.

Hadhad and his extended family of more than 60 people fled from Syria to Lebanon in 2012.

“No one is born to immigrate,” he said, as he spoke of the trauma and hopelessness his family experienced.

Hadhad tried, unsuccessfully, to petition the embassies of various countries to grant his family immigrant status. Each door remained firmly closed.

One night, as Hadhad caught a cab back to his family’s place in the refugee camp, the driver suggested he try going to Canada. That suggestion turned the page to the next chapter of the Hadhad family’s story. In late 2015, they arrived in Antigonish, Nova Scotia.

Today, the family’s chocolatier business, Peace by Chocolate, is the third-largest employer in Antigonish. “Small acts of kindness matter,” Hadhad said. “There is nothing good about war, except its ending. No one is to blame for being a refugee.”

The conference was just the medicine Marie Moyer, an attendee from Lethbridge Mennonite Church, needed.

“I wasn’t sure what to expect when I registered for the conference,” she said. “I guess I was looking for some inspiration sort of outside the daily drudgery, and the more we talked, the more I realized that I needed this.”

Rebecca Schnell, MCC Alberta’s community engagement coordinator, helped plan the conference.

“I think of peace like harmony in a song,” she said. “It’s okay if we’re not all singing the same note of agreement. Peace is like the notes in a chord. We want to avoid discord and create harmony.” ❧



# The song of Mary

*Reflections for Advent*

The Visitation by Mariotto Albertinelli

**M**ary, whose heart is full of things to ponder, goes to see her older relative Elizabeth in the hill country. Both are pregnant. Both are in on the secret of the Messiah. They are brimming with possibility and responsibility. They have both surrendered in a visceral, physical way to the flow of divine will.

Mary arrives. When Elizabeth hears her greeting, the baby leaps within her and the Spirit erupts. “Blessed are you among women,” Elizabeth shouts. “Blessed is the fruit of your womb . . . and blessed is she who believed.”

In this meeting, which is literally pregnant with the salvation of the world, Mary responds with the famous passage known as the Magnificat or Song of Mary.

In the quiet waiting of Advent; in the dark, confined expectation of the womb; in the meeting of two humble women in a troubled part of the world, the fullness of the moment, the fullness of history, bursts forth.

**My soul magnifies the Lord,**  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,  
for he has looked with favour on the  
lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will  
call me blessed;  
for the Mighty One has done great  
things for me,  
and holy is his name.

His mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.  
He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the  
thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from  
their thrones,  
and lifted up the lowly;  
he has filled the hungry with good  
things,  
and sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
according to the promise he made to  
our ancestors,

to Abraham and to his descendants  
forever.

—As recorded in the first chapter of Luke

## Our own annunciations

By Marlene Kropf

*Aren't there annunciations  
of one sort or another  
in most lives?*

In her brilliant poem “Annunciation,” poet Denise Levertov imagines the startling encounter between Mary and the angel Gabriel. The young girl of the poem is not meekly obedient; rather, she is courageous, bravely questioning her unexpected guest. As Mary perceives the astonishing call and ministry she is being offered, she does not quail. She boldly accepts “a destiny more momentous than any in all of Time.”

If Levertov’s imagination is anywhere

close to the reality of what happened, then Mary's revolutionary song comes as no surprise. Steeped in the prophetic tradition of her Hebrew forebears, Mary rejoices in a mighty God who pulls down tyrants from their thrones and brings freedom to the downtrodden. She offers her heart's devotion to a God whose face is turned toward the poor and hungry and away from the rich and well-fed. Because she herself is one of the lowly ones, she recognizes that God's favour toward her is a sign of God's never-ending commitment to bring justice in all the world.

Though many musical versions of Mary's song are beautifully lyrical, none quite matches the passion and fervour of Rory Cooney's inspired setting of Mary's powerful credo to a traditional Irish tune, "Star of County Down" (under the title "My Soul Cries Out" in *Voices Together*, 412). The dramatic pulse of the

music and vigor of the text set our feet to dancing and propel us right out of our quiet sanctuaries into a world crying for comfort and release.

A friend of mine once remarked, "Mary's song is the only creed the church needs." Everything we need to know about God's love and gracious mercy is here; so is our call to join with God's purposes of healing and hope in the world.

Advent is a season for celebrating not only the angel's annunciation to Mary and her exuberant response to God's invitation, but also our own annunciations. When has the Spirit touched us and awakened our hearts to God's dreams for the world? When have we been inspired to sing and act for justice? When have we danced to the tune of God's deliverance?

*Marlene Kropf served as associate professor in Spiritual Formation and*

*Worship for 25 years at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary.*

## Magnificat

By Laura Funk

When I read Mary's words in Luke 1, I immediately hear music as well. Very specifically, a concert I attended years ago. The soaring harmonies of that night found a home in my soul. I vividly recall the experience even now.

Mary's vision of the powerful and the weak is poetic. It is the stuff of dreams of every oppressed nation, group or person, the heart's longing cry for justice, restoration.

I hear two themes inextricably bound together in her song. One is that of awe and wonder for God, praise and worship for who God is: her saviour. She celebrates God's past deeds of care for her and her people and their call as a worshipping community to be a light and blessing to all nations. The second theme is the heartbeat of social justice. God is acting on behalf of those who are hungry and those dominated by foreign powers. God sees those toiling under oppression and comes to their assistance. Therefore, let tyrants beware.

Mary's song is a reminder to me that praise and worship pairs well with social justice. If I get too lost in only praise for God, I can become complacent, thinking God will do what God wants, I have no part in the divine plan. On the other hand, if I get too deep into advocating for justice and lose sight of God, who walks ahead of me in this work, I can feel anxious or discouraged, thinking there's no hope for the deep brokenness I see all around me. However, if I hold these two themes together, praise reminds me whose world this is, and participating in the work of justice reminds me of what it means to follow the child of peace.

May Mary's song fill your heart with awe and wonder and challenge to work for peace and justice. ☿

*Laura Funk is a spiritual director living in Winnipeg.*



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS PHOTO

Visitation, from Altarpiece of the Virgin (St Vaast Altarpiece)

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## News briefs

### Statement on antisemitism and Islamophobia

On November 2, Mennonite Church Canada and the regional churches issued the following statement:

“The horrific attacks by Hamas on Israeli citizens on October 7, followed by the brutal siege, bombing and invasion of Gaza by the Israel Defense Forces since then, have led to an increase in anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim speech and hate crimes around the world, including in Canada. We call on Mennonite Church Canada congregations and members to resist this rhetoric in their spheres of influence, and to show support for their Jewish and Muslim neighbours in Jesus’ way of love. We also continue to call our congregations and members to pray for a just peace in Israel and Palestine which will allow both Israelis and Palestinians to live in freedom and safety.”

### Die Mennonitische Post appoints new editor

John Wesley Dueck has been hired as the new editor of *Die Mennonitische Post* after Kennert Giesbrecht stepped down. Dueck is originally from the Menno Colony in Paraguay. He began this position in mid-October. *Die Mennonitische Post* is published in Steinbach, Manitoba, for subscribers in Mexico, Belize, Bolivia, Paraguay, United States and Canada.

**SOURCE: DIE MENNONITISCHE POST**

### Seminary honours Martha Smith Good

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary honoured Martha Smith Good of New Hamburg, Ontario, with the school’s Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition award. Smith Good was the first ordained woman in what is now Mennonite Church Eastern Canada. She helped organize women who had experienced sexual misconduct from Mennonite leadership, and helped plan AMBS’s acknowledgement service for the sexual abuse against women in the church. Peter Stucky and J. Denny Weaver also received the award this year.

**SOURCE: AMBS**

### Foodgrains Bank and MCC Canada recognized

Charity Intelligence has named Canadian Foodgrains Bank and Mennonite Central Committee Canada as two of the top 10 international impact charities for the sixth and fourth years in a row, respectively. Charity Intelligence monitors and evaluates hundreds of Canadian charities from all sectors.

**SOURCE: MCC**

### Grebel MDS Service Scholarship

Students who live at Conrad Grebel University College and have volunteered with Mennonite Disaster Service for at least four weeks are eligible for a \$4,500 scholarship. The MDS Service Scholarship Award was established in the hope of promoting student service and volunteering.

**SOURCE: CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**

### Student writes concerto for orchestra

After Georg Neuhofer won the 2023 Verna Mae Janzen Music Competition and was granted the chance to perform a piano concerto with Mennonite Community Orchestra (MCO), Neuhofer’s friend and fellow CMU student, Liam Berry, hatched the idea to write the concerto for the event. Berry subsequently sketched out the bulk of the 10-minute concerto on a napkin. It was performed on November 5.

**SOURCE: CMU**

# Mennonites and the state

*A Mennonite perspective on religious freedom  
Part 2 of 3*

By César García

I love mosaics. Mosaics are artworks that show an image—a message—made up of many small pieces.

In Christian art, it is common to find mosaics representing an image of Jesus. One example of a Christian mosaic is in the Basilica of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, Italy. In that piece, called *Cristo attorniato da angeli e santi*, many stones of different colours and sizes are organized so that the viewer can see a depiction of Jesus.

Human societies are like living mosaics. They tell us their values and priorities by how they are organized and how their members interact.

Capitalist societies value financial progress, even if that means poverty for others.

Totalitarian politics value order over freedom.

Communist societies often seem to privilege economic equity at the expense of personal initiative.

That, of course, is overly simplistic. None of these structures of society are precisely as I have described, but these broad characterizations illustrate that politics transmit a message.

The design of a society—its politics and interpersonal relations—tells us what that society is.

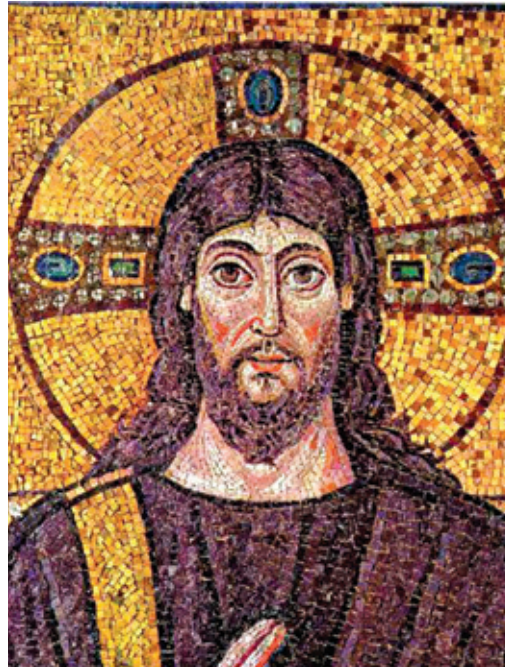
Sadly, every human community or nation includes structures that allow injustice, domination, violence and abuse. Evil is pervasive. Of course, some political systems are worse than others, but all are fallen structures that transmit values and priorities that contradict God's will and kingdom.

All of these different mosaics and designs of society have emerged after the intrusion of evil in human history. Because we are born outside paradise, we are immersed in politics and social interactions that ignore God's will. Regardless

of where you are born, your country and inherited political system shape you with values and priorities that may contrast with God's kingdom.

We are like fish swimming in the only reality we know: a fallen and evil world. Without realizing it, we move within evil structures equivalent to water for a fish.

Our financial relations, our systems of domination, how we understand justice, and how we face conflict and disagreements all include evil values from which there is only one way to escape.



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS PHOTO

*Cristo attorniato da angeli e santi.*

## Becoming citizens of God's kingdom

“Repent” is Jesus' message. Pray for the coming of God's kingdom; believe in the good news.

That is the escape route toward the freedom Jesus offers, and the mark of a new politics not from this social order.

Repentance is the human response to God's grace that opens our lives to the Holy Spirit, changing hearts and minds from the inside and creating a just society on the outside.

The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) describes that society. The whole sermon speaks to Jesus' followers as a group, and in doing so, it mentions God's kingdom eight times. Without being exhaustive, the Sermon on the Mount tells us about the kingdom of God: its ethics, some of its benefits and responsibilities, and who belongs to it.

The new society that organizes itself as God's kingdom evidences a new creation in which finances, power relationships, justice, leadership and many other facets of communal life add up to a message.

Like the Italian mosaic mentioned before, that message is the image of Jesus.

When we enter God's kingdom, we receive new citizenship and are freed to experience a new kind of politics. We are not slaves of evil systems anymore. We belong to a new society where, along with other followers of Christ, we project Jesus' image to the world.

But we still live in our countries and human societies, right? Yes! However, now we do so as representatives of God's kingdom. Do we look for ways of serving our human communities? Yes, but we do so as ambassadors of God's kingdom. ☞

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

# Old Testament stories resonate with rural Colombian women

By Madalene Arias  
Eastern Canada Correspondent

The stories of women in the Old Testament serve as an advocacy tool for Colombian women who face paramilitary and gang-related violence in rural communities.

This is the outcome of persistent efforts of *Mujer y Paz*, a branch of *Justapaz*, a Mennonite peace and justice organization based in the Colombian capital of Bogotá. The goal of the *Mujer y Paz* (women and peace) program is to support women as they repair the social fabric of their society.

The program encourages and empowers women to participate in political discourse and spaces where decisions are made. At the same time,

it teaches them to protect themselves and their families in this process.

“Many of these women are caged in their homes because it is the safest place that they can be,” says Natalia Parra via video call. She is a trained lawyer who served as a social worker, working with women and young girls, for three years prior to taking on the coordinator role with *Mujer y Paz* in February 2023.

*Mujer y Paz* facilitates discussions among women using a workbook called *Mujeres Cristianas e Incidencia Política Para la Paz*, or Christian Women and Political Impact for Peace.

Through the program, women hold weekly meetings at their local churches. Among other things, they discuss the biblical story of Ruth, who, despite initial protests, travelled to Judah with her loving and loyal mother-in-law, Naomi. Both women are widowed amid famine. Together, they become examples of the good that can come from solidarity among women amid difficult times.

The lives of the women who connect with the peace program have been marked by various forms of violence, including domestic abuse, the loss of a spouse to gang-related or paramilitary violence, or recruitment of their children into paramilitary groups to the benefit of the drug trade. Some of the women have been trafficked and then thrown back into society.

Together with one or two of the other coordinators, Parra travels to places where city services like cellular networks

and indoor plumbing become rarities. These places include the departments (states) of Chocó, Caquetá, Narino and Putumayo. The latter two are known as global leaders in cocaine production.

To initiate contact with the women in these communities, Parra and her team have built relationships with local churches.

“Pastors have this misconception that women should not engage in politics,” says Parra. It is a common misconception and particularly strong in the department of Putumayo, she adds. But Parra and her colleagues persist.

For security reasons, Parra cannot name the women who seek support from *Mujer y Paz*, but she recalls a specific



*A workbook used with rural women facing violence in Colombia.*



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situation in which a woman had endured years of abuse from her husband. As the woman prepared to leave him, she turned to her local pastor for support.

“The pastor told her that separation from her husband went against religion, and that her role was to stay and endure,” recalls Parra.

The woman did as the pastor told her. Time passed, and the woman suffered injuries severe enough that she sought refuge for herself and her children at a nearby clinic.

Sometime later, she became a regular participant in *Mujer y Paz* workshops. Parra says the woman has since moved on from her marriage and found someone who loves, protects and supports her. They live together in a new community where she serves as a leader, training other women in advocacy.

“She was criticized horribly for having a second husband,” says Parra.

Due to the perspectives of the local pastors, the biblical focus of their workshops provides a critical edge into

these communities. A typical weekly meeting may begin with the story of Abigail from 1 Samuel. Abigail’s father married her off to Nabal because of his wealth. Since Nabal was also known to be an alcoholic with a nasty character, it is presumed that she suffered mistreatment in their time together.

After Nabal denies hospitality to the future king David and his men, Abigail learns that David is on his way to make Nabal pay for offending him. She packs food and supplies on a donkey and rides off to meet David before he reaches Nabal. She acknowledges her husband’s error and tells David to let God deal with her husband, thus avoiding a confrontation between Nabal and David. By using her wisdom and persuasion to prevent a bloodbath, she becomes an example of diplomacy.

Parra says this approach to reflecting on biblical stories is generally well-received.

When the biblical portion of the night is through, the stage is set for Parra to take over and introduce some contemporary

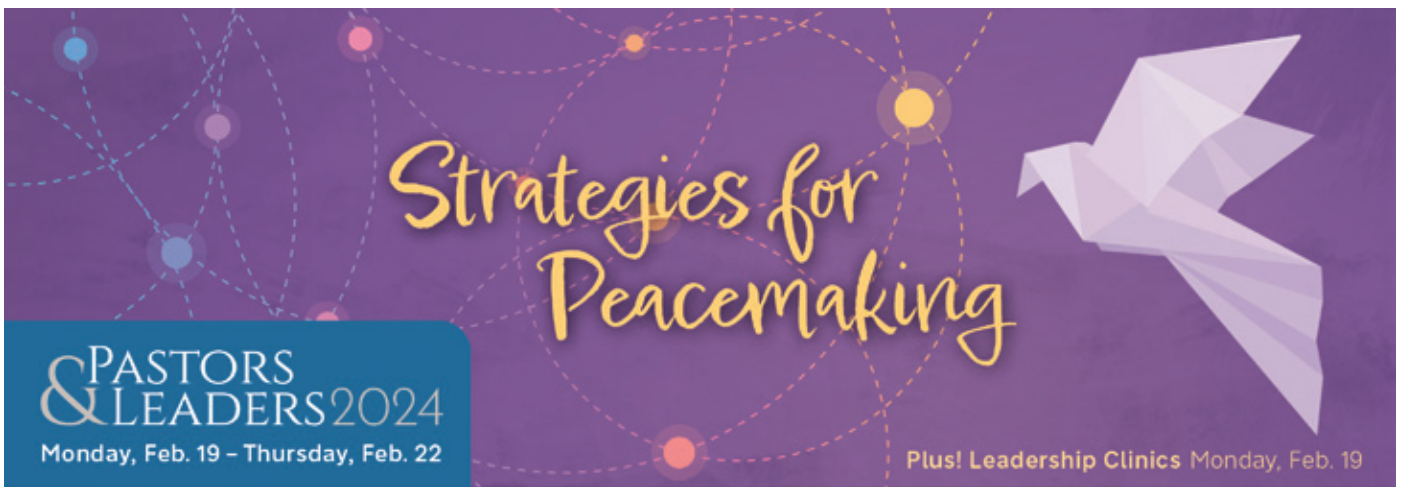
piece of political information, such as UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which “affirmed the importance of including participation of women and the inclusion of gender perspectives in peace negotiations and humanitarian planning and post-conflict peacebuilding and governance.”

“Recently, pastors have asked to join our workshops because now they’re interested and want to learn,” says Parra. “That was quite the surprise.”

The program also seeks to address environmental injustices. Currently, environmental advocates are at high risk of assassination in Colombia.

In one incident, *Mujer y Paz* worked with a woman who was attacked while trying to defend El Páramo Santurbán, a mountainous region and rich water source.

*Mujer y Paz* is one of several programs offered by Justapaz, which was founded in 1990. ☿



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# Pastors gather for retreat

Story and photo by Keith St. Jean  
Hope, B.C.

**T**wenty-seven Mennonite Church B.C. church leaders and their families gathered at Camp Squeah from November 3 to 5 for a weekend of renewal and relationship-building.

Four worship and discussion sessions were framed around the centred-set church model, from the work of Mark Baker. Baker was the guest presenter at the 2023 MCBC annual gathering and LEAD conference.

Worship was led by John Williams

(Peace Mennonite), Kevin Barkowsky (Sherbrooke Mennonite), Bless Len (Living Hope Mennonite), Andrew Haak (Level Ground Mennonite) and Joshua Kuepfer from Camp Squeah.

Newly-installed executive minister Shel Boese asked four questions of the group:

1. **What does** it mean to be Jesus-centred and how is that lived out in our lives and the lives of our congregations?
2. **What has** to change in terms of our view

of God if we are to lean into this idea that Jesus is the centre of our faith?

3. **What has** to change in our formation practices to create a more Jesus-centred practice?

4. **How does** our view of life and transformation change if we are Jesus-centred?

These questions were discussed in detail as the participants wrestled with how to achieve unity without demanding unanimity. Boese then presented four Jesus-centred commitments from the resources on unity created by the Central Plains Mennonite Conference:

1. **Jesus is Lord.**
2. **The authority** of scripture is rooted in the authority of Jesus. We are people of the crucified and resurrected Christ, and the Bible is our anchor.
3. **The Confession** of Faith as it points us toward Jesus and a life lived in Him.
4. **Prayerfully seeking** and attending to the Holy Spirit, understanding that the Spirit will never lead us into ways that do not reflect or echo Christ.

Two statements ended the sessions. The first was that love is the final unifying element in our theology, faith and practice. The second was that Jesus can handle all of us, together, at the same time. This idea, stated Boese, has the ability to revolutionize how we think about unity and identity. ❧



*Pastors and their families gathered at Camp Squeah in November.*

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# Adjusting our structures

*An update from Mennonite Church Canada*

By Geraldine Balzer

In 2017, Mennonite Church Canada put new structures into place based on the work of the Future Directions Task Force (FDTF). Over the last six years, we have been living into the newly imagined structures, with varying degrees of success.

As we have attempted to do this, I have often thought of Jesus's parable about putting new wine into old wineskins. The metaphor advises that the two are incompatible.

In these last years, leaders have been working with a mix of old and new structures. In some cases we have tried to take what was (old wine), and place it into new processes and structures (new wineskins).

The Future Directions Task Force (FDTF) of pre-2017 envisioned a model that gave congregations a greater voice in the nation-wide church. They anticipated a reduced national staff, with more responsibilities for decision making at the regional and congregational levels.

Structural and financial changes were made to enhance the potential of the regions to carry out both the regional and nationwide agenda.

Six years later, we now have a better understanding of what has worked and what has not worked. As a result, the Joint Council will be making some necessary adjustments to the structure while still honouring the direction given to us by the delegate body.

One challenge manifested by the 2017 changes is that regions (and their congregations) struggle with the weight of the decisions that rest upon them. Decision-making can be a slow process. Needs identified at the regional level are brought to Joint Council for discussion, and then returned to the regions for testing before a final decision can be made.

One realistic example: When a need is identified by Indigenous-Settler Relations or International Witness, processes

require the decision be discussed at the regional level. The deliberations are then returned to Joint Council for a final decision.

Such scenarios are not uncommon. Some decisions have become encumbered by additional layers of communication and deliberation, a bottleneck the FDTF perhaps did not foresee.

Joint Council values the work that the Future Directions Task Force undertook in identifying challenges with the old structure. Imagining something new takes courage and a willingness to change. However, in six years of working with the 2017 model, it has become clear that a few structural adjustments are needed to streamline some processes. Joint Council is confident such adjustments can be made without compromising the vision that delegates set before us.

Over the next months, Joint Council will consider adjustments that need to be made in order to be a church that continues to live into the vision with which we have been entrusted.

Thank you for your attention to this update. ☺

*Geraldine Balzer serves as moderator of Mennonite Church Canada.*

## Restorative justice takes root in Zambia and Malawi

Mennonite Central Committee

A restorative justice curriculum has been introduced at 100 correctional facilities in Zambia and Malawi.

In 2019, Rod Friesen, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario Restorative Justice Coordinator, was invited to facilitate a week-long training session for officers in the Zambian Correctional Service (ZCS). This training session was part of a pilot project of MCC Zambia in partnership with the Zambian government. Their goal was complete culture change within the Zambian corrections system.

The nature of the criminal justice



MCC PHOTO BY AMANDA TALSTRA

**Issa Ebombolo facilitates restorative justice training with officers from Malawi Prison Services.**

system in Zambia was largely punitive — punishment for those who had broken the law without addressing how to restore either the victims of crime or the perpetrators. But representatives of the ZCS saw there could be a better way, built on the concepts of restorative justice. This approach addresses the needs of those who have been victimized, the community impacted by the crime and the offender.

It was important to MCC staff that ZCS personnel be taught how to give the training themselves. Now, four years since the first round of training, the fruits of that initial visit and the training provided are becoming apparent.

Issa Ebombolo, MCC Zambia and Malawi peacebuilding coordinator, says the training content Friesen created is being used at the ZCS staff training college for all officers and has been fully

integrated into all 69 Zambian correctional facilities. The training is also being used by 31 correctional facilities in the neighbouring country of Malawi.

Ebombolo has a long resume of peace-building work across Africa, including time as a peace education facilitator in Zambian refugee camps with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and time as chair of the MCC Africa Peace Network. He says the impact of the restorative justice project has been unique within the African continent. Once learned, restorative justice is embraced because it connects deeply with traditionally held values of village life. Those values centre around how a community works together to understand the harm done and repair it by bringing the harm-doer back into community with appropriate accountability.

An example of this has been the establishment of peace clubs within Zambian prisons. Zebbron Mwale joined such a club. "After the message of peace anchored well in my heart, I quickly learned about the

need to break the chain of revenge," says Mwale. He was able to reconcile with his neighbour, who had reported him to the police for growing cannabis, a crime in Zambia. Mwale also secured a pardon and was released from prison for his improved behaviour.

The impact of the training continues to grow, and it will soon be available to 20 countries that will have access to the training content for their correctional facilities.

Ebombolo uses the story of the mango seed to illustrate how this project has grown. He says when we scatter seeds, we do not know which ones will grow. We may be surprised many years later when we come back to the village to see that others are eating from this big tree we planted.

"Sometimes it is only our grandchildren or our great-grandchildren that will see the changes from the seeds we sow." ❧

*Adapted from an MCC release.*

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# Creating wholeness and God’s shalom

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This fall at Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, we hosted several events that, on the surface, were designed to raise money for our independent school and build community between students, parents, alumni, longtime supporters and our supporting churches.

These events were successful: we raised money and brought people together to sing, pray, eat delicious food and enjoy God’s creation.

But could it be that these events also contributed to creating wholeness and God’s shalom?

On a recent episode of Kate Bowler’s podcast, *Everything Happens*, Bowler and her guest, psychologist Dr. Lisa Damour, discussed the mental health crisis facing young people. Rather than equating mental health as feeling good, happy and at ease, Damour defined it as having feelings that fit the situation (even if they are not pleasant feelings) and managing those feelings effectively.

Bowler and Damour suggested that when people feel low—a regular low that is part of everyday life—they can turn to their community by helping others and finding a way to be useful.

When I look at Westgate’s recent events through that lens, I see we encouraged members of our school community to cultivate good mental health by helping others.

At our annual Cyclathon, 70 parents, board members and staff volunteered to ensure a fun and safe event could take place. At our opening program, 80 percent of our students performed and led others in worship in gratitude. At our “Dine and Donate” event, we had 80+ volunteers—the majority of them Grade 9 to 12 students—serving guests.

Serving others is a way to follow in Jesus’s footsteps, but it is also key to God’s peace seeping into our lives both individually and communally.





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## AT CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE



### SCHOLARSHIPS

All students who are Canadian citizens or Permanent Residents receive full tuition scholarships for up to six terms of full-time study.



### MTS-MDIV SEQUENTIAL DEGREE

Students in the applied studies stream have the option to apply their MTS degree toward a sequential Master of Divinity at AMBS and CMU.

Explore theology and develop ministry skills within a diverse learning community.

The MTS program at Conrad Grebel University College educates and equips ministers and layleaders for roles in Mennonite Church Canada and beyond. It also prepares them for advanced graduate theological studies.

Study the Bible, Christian theology, church history, and the practice of ministry in an Anabaptist-Mennonite ecumenical setting. Explore current scholarship and examine contemporary issues. Interact with faculty and students from diverse academic disciplines in a small classroom setting. Test ideas. Develop skills and self-understanding through supervised ministry opportunities. Experience the support and expertise of faculty and fellow students.

"We work hard to create an engaging and supportive learning community. When students and faculty members with different life experiences and theological perspectives get into the classroom together, the result can be transformative."

- Jeremy Bergen, MTS Professor



[uwaterloo.ca/theological-studies](https://uwaterloo.ca/theological-studies)

## Calendar

### British Columbia

**Nov. 25:** MHSBC PRESENTS: "Holodomor Remembrance: Voices of Survivors." Doors open at 2:30 p.m.; Film/Presentations at 3:00 p.m.; Faspa at 4:00 p.m. For tickets call: 604-853-6177 or online: [www.mhsbc.com](http://www.mhsbc.com).

**Dec. 9,10:** Advent Vespers with Abendmusik Choir, 7:30 p.m. Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, 3386 Mount Lehman Road, Abbotsford (9). St. Philip's Anglican Church, 3737 West 27th Avenue, Vancouver (10). Donations go to Menno Hall project at UBC ([pcda.bc.ca](http://pcda.bc.ca)).

**Mar. 11-14, 2024:** Mennonite Camping Association is hosting its bi-national gathering at Camp Squeah in Hope. More information to come.

**June 7-9, 2024:** Young Adult (18-35) Anabaptist Conference, "Faith, Activism, and Church: Building an Active Future" at Camp Squeah.

### Manitoba

**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 p.m., 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. 10:** Soli Deo Gloria choir presents Rheinberger's "Der Stern Von Bethlehem" *eine Weihnachtskantate*—Advent Concert with orchestral accompanist conducted by Yuri Klaz at First Mennonite Church, 922 Notre Dame Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

**Dec. 15:** The exhibition, "What are Men for?" by artist Tom Lovatt opens at the MHC Gallery at 7:30 p.m. This exhibition runs until January 13, 2024, and features Tom Lovatt's unflinchingly larger-

than-life series of portraits of mixed martial arts fighters.

**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.

**March 1-2, 2024:** MCM Annual Gathering at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Winkler. Friday Evening - Worship Service and Celebration, Saturday - Delegates, guests, and friends meet, learn, deliberate. Lots more info to come.

**May 4, 2024:** Faith and Life Choirs Spring Concerts. (4th) First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg; (5) Morden Mennonite Church, Morden.

**June 21-23, 2024:** 75...Already?! Save the date for Camp Assiniboia's 75th Anniversary. More details to come.

### Ontario

**Nov. 22:** Rockway Mennonite Collegiate invites you to their Annual General Meeting at 7:30 p.m. Back by popular demand, this meeting will be online. To receive the Zoom link, please email [AGM@rockway.ca](mailto:AGM@rockway.ca). For membership information, visit [www.rockway.ca](http://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](mailto: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](http://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](http://www.centreinthesquare.com).

### Online

**Until Feb. 13:** Join us for Climate Pollinators, a webinar series on

creation care. This webinar is jointly organized by the Creation Care Task Force and Anabaptist Climate Collaborative. In these webinars, MWC's Creation Care Task Force members from each region will host one hour of storytelling and Q&A. Church members from around the world will share how they are affected by climate change – and responding with resilient action and gospel hope. Each webinar will take place at on Tuesday at 2 p.m. UTC. Register at [mwc-cmm.org/en/resources/climate-pollinators-webinar-series](http://mwc-cmm.org/en/resources/climate-pollinators-webinar-series).

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

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



## Classifieds

Shekinah Retreat Centre ([www.shekinah.ca](http://www.shekinah.ca)) has an opening for the Executive Director position. We are seeking a high energy person to grow our camping and facility rental programs. The preferred candidate will have a commitment to the Anabaptist tradition, an entrepreneurial spirit, non profit leadership experience and excellent communication skills. Position starts as soon as possible. Most salary and benefits follow MC Canada guidelines. For further information contact Board chair, Phyllis Goertz: 306 242 8367 or [p.goertz@sasktel.net](mailto:p.goertz@sasktel.net).

## Upcoming Advertising Dates

### Issue Date

Dec. 1  
Dec. 15  
Dec. 29 *Digital Issue*

### Ads Due

Nov. 20  
Dec. 5  
Dec. 18

## Advertising Information

Contact Ben Thiessen  
1-800-378-2524 ext. 3 | [advert@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:advert@canadianmennonite.org)



PHOTO BY MOHAMMED ZANOUN/ACTIVESTILLS.ORG

*Palestinians in Khan Yunis, Gaza, after Israeli airstrikes on October 26.*

**We're broken. I think this describes the feeling, more or less, right now in the West Bank, in Palestine. We are broken. There is a strong, strong sense of despair. . . .**

**We're broken by the silence of the world, by the complicity of the world leaders. . . . We're equally frustrated [by] the complicity of the church, the western church. . . .**

**Where is God in the midst of all of this? As I've said, he's under the rubble, he's with the people in the hospital, he's the victim of that very same violence. . . .**

**I see Jesus in solidarity with us. . . . Jesus' presence is indeed comforting.**

**The challenge is to see Sunday coming. . . . This is the real faith crisis, this is why I pray, "Lord, help our unbelief," because it looks so dark. ☿**

*These comments were shared by Munther Isaac—pastor of Christmas Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bethlehem and academic dean at Bethlehem Bible College—during a November 3 web event convened by Jerusalem-based Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Centre. See full recording at [tinyurl.com/sabeeldialogue](https://tinyurl.com/sabeeldialogue).*

