

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

June 19, 2017

Volume 21 Number 13

The view  
through a  
prison  
keyhole

Christians in  
the Holy Land  
make their  
voices heard  
pg. 4

## inside

Muddying the waters on Israeli divestment 6

What would you risk for peace? 7

End of School Roundup 20-23

## EDITORIAL

## Broadening our prayers

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER  
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

**A**s I began writing this, my Twitter and Facebook feeds reported news about a gun attack on an Egyptian bus carrying Coptic Christians. The world gasped and wept—once again. The people of Israel, Lebanon and Jordan struggle with the enormous challenge of caring for thousands of people fleeing violence in their neighbouring homeland. From the West Bank we hear news of more house demolitions. And Syrian refugees in our own communities tell stories of homes and places of worship destroyed, of violence and fear.

Our feature on page 4, “The view through a prison keyhole,” examines the situation of Christian Arabs in Israel and Palestine. It comes courtesy of the Palestine and Israel Resolution Working Group of Mennonite Church Canada. This group was set up following the MC Canada assembly’s resolution on Israel-Palestine last July.

Within the Mennonite body across Canada, opinions and beliefs vary concerning the past, present and future of the lands of the Bible. We argue about God’s intention for that land and those people. We offer varying political solutions to the current realities there. We have different prescriptions for how people in other parts of the world should respond. Content in this issue of *Canadian Mennonite*, and linked content on our website, reflect a bit of that

diversity.

For nine years, my family lived in the Arab city of Nazareth, Israel, working, playing and worshipping with local Christians, and going to school and shopping with both Christians and Muslims. We visited friends in Jewish communities and occasionally worshipped with Messianic believers in Christ.



We learned that the followers of Christ in Israel and Palestine live in two different realities. Both groups are minorities in their larger societies. But Messianic believers have full rights as citizens and live in communities protected by the state. Their young people serve in the Israeli army. At the very least, Arab Christians face discrimination, and, in the disputed lands of Gaza and the West Bank, they experience loss of livelihood, freedom, home demolitions and sometimes death.

In John 15:12 Jesus says to his disciples, “*This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.*” God’s intention is that all followers of Jesus love one another. Living in these two different realities, the followers of Jesus in the Bible lands sometimes find it hard to understand each other. Their unique realities make love for each other a difficult task.

These are our sisters and brothers in Christ—both the ones who worship him in Hebrew and the ones who worship in Arabic. How can they grow in love for

each other? And can we North American Christians hold both peoples in our hearts?

Here is my proposal: Let’s ease up on the arguing over theology and politics. Instead, let’s start praying for all the followers of Christ in the Middle East. Our prayer will be an act of love for our brothers and sisters.

During our later years in Nazareth, my husband and I were part of a small group that gathered regularly to pray. It included believers from both the Arab and the Messianic communities. We prayed for each other’s families and ministries, and for the body of Christ in that land. Occasionally, hundreds of Jewish and Arab believers would gather at a local forest for a large joint worship service. We saw emerging conversations on how to interpret biblical texts related to the ownership of the land, justice and the future work of God in that place.

We celebrate glimmers of hope like these and ponder how God’s work of peace might continue to grow there.

God calls us to pray for all the people of the Middle East, no matter their religion—or lack thereof. But if that feels like too broad a call, let’s consider how we can pray for the people there whom Christ has given to us as brothers and sisters. May God’s love shine in their communities and may that love extend as a witness for peace across their land.

If we pray for our sisters and brothers—all of them—we can also make a commitment to listen carefully to their voices. By praying and listening we may find ways to support their efforts to live as faithful disciples of Christ in the troubled lands of the Bible.

## ABOUT THE COVER:

**A painting on a gate in the Aida refugee camp in Beit Jala, adjacent to Bethlehem. The keyhole represents the prison that Palestinians, particularly the refugee population, feel. Many refugees have kept the keys to the houses from which they were evicted in 1948 or 1967, as a symbol of hope for peace. See feature on pages 4 to 8.**

PHOTO BY BYRON REMPEL-BURKHOLDER, PALESTINE AND ISRAEL RESOLUTION WORKING GROUP

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# contents

JUNE 19, 2017 / VOL. 21, NO. 13



## The view through a prison keyhole 4

Subtitled 'Christians in the Holy Land make their voices heard,' author **BYRON REMPEL-BURKHOLDER** profiles the ideas and efforts of **TONY DEIK, NAIM ATTEK, MITRI RAHEB,** the **AWAD** brothers and **JONATHAN KUTTAB.**

## Prosthetic limb leads to new hope 15

Mennonite Church Canada Witness worker **GREGORY RABUS** helps a Syrian refugee get fitted with a new leg, which leads to conversations about God and faith.

## Growing leaders in five years 16

**JEAN LEHN EPP** reflects on her work as Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's youth pastor/worker coach.

## A man of 'Christian faith and its joys and struggles' 19

Testimonials and tributes to the late **ALAN KREIDER** have been pouring in to Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary since his passing on May 8.

## End of School Roundup 20-23

Read stories from Goshen College, AMBS, Mennonite Collegiate Institute, Conrad Grebel University College, Columbia Bible College, Eastern Mennonite Seminary and Eastern Mennonite University.

## So every creature can sing 24

Faith-based creation care curriculum now available with a Canadian focus.

## Young Voices 27-29

Youth ministers **PAUL LOEWEN** and **CARRIE LEHN** are profiled in 'Before I go' and 'Called to be a part of the church,' respectively.

## Regular features:

For discussion **8** Readers write **9** Milestones **12**

A moment from yesterday **13** Yellow Page **26** Calendar **30**

Classifieds **31**

## Broadening our prayers 2

**VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER**

## Don't interrupt me 9

**TIM FROESE**

## Holy sexuality 10

**MELISSA MILLER**

## It's better to give 11

**WENDY HELGERMAN**



Award-winning member of the Canadian Church Press



GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD FEATURE

# The view through a prison keyhole

*Christians in the Holy Land make their voices heard*

BY BYRON REMPEL-BURKHOLDER

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA



*Star Street in the Old City of Bethlehem.*

**T**ony Deik experienced a dramatic return to faith when he was studying at Birzeit University in the Israeli-occupied territory of the West Bank. Raised Roman Catholic in Bethlehem, he had mostly abandoned that faith as he experimented with secular and New Age ideas instead.



**Tony Deik**

Still restless though, he decided to read the Gospel of John. Midway through, he suddenly found himself overwhelmed with a sense of his need for God. That was the moment he gave his life to Christ.

It took him six months of Internet research before he found a church in Ramallah that he felt would nurture his renewed faith. In those months of exploring Christian groups, a huge irony nearly sabotaged his faith—and it still drives much of his work today as a biblical studies professor at Bethlehem Bible College, a West Bank school that trains Arab-speaking Christians for witness and ministry.

His dilemma: How can so many Christians around the world give unqualified support to the modern political State of Israel, when that same state continues a decades-old military occupation of his land, flouting international law and denying the Palestinian people their basic human rights of dignity, movement, adequate water and self-determination?

Following graduation, this disconnect often brought him to tears as he served abroad with an international missionary organization and later studied at the London (England) School of Theology. “What hurt me the most,” he says, “was that the people I was praying with—good friends—considered the military victories of Israel as ‘miracles of God.’ How could the massacres and displacement of our people be considered God’s doing?”

## ***Seven decades of injustice***

Deik is only 30 years old, but the memories are collective among his people:



*Jonathan Kuttab teaches an intensive course on international law at Bethlehem Bible College in the spring of 2016 to both Christian and Muslim students. The course is part of the college's new master of peace studies program.*

- **THE VIOLENT** creation of the Israeli state in 1948, when more than 750,000 Arab-speaking Palestinians fled or were driven away as refugees and not allowed to return.
- **ISRAEL'S CONQUEST** of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem in the Six Day War of 1967, displacing 300,000 more Palestinians.
- **THE DEVASTATING** bombings and crippling siege of Gaza in the last decade.
- **DISCRIMINATORY POLICIES** against the 20 percent of Israel proper who are Palestinian Arabs.

That the State of Israel has flourished at the expense of justice for the Palestinians is bad enough, he says. That this has happened with the political support of Christians far away, whose politics have been shaped by what he and most Palestinian Christians consider to be an erroneous understanding of the Bible, is tragic.

North American Mennonites encounter this sense of dissonance and betrayal whenever they meet Palestinians in the Holy Land, whether on learning tours or living and working alongside them.

Before the formation of the State of Israel in 1948, Christians of all stripes—Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant and evangelical—constituted about 30 percent of the Arab population of Palestine. Their roots in the land go back hundreds of years; for some, to the very beginnings of the church at Pentecost.



*Checkpoint 300 at Bethlehem, one of hundreds of checkpoints along the separation barrier that Israel has created between the West Bank and Israel.*

Today, after the forced displacements of 1948 and 1967, and the later emigration of Palestinians and the influx of Jewish immigrants, Christians number only 1.5 percent, both in Israel proper and in the occupied territories. The vast majority in the territories and among Israeli Arabs are Muslim. Secular and religious Jews make up the majority of the State of Israel proper.

While some pro-Israel ministries in Europe and North America claim that the exodus has been caused by Muslim persecution, Palestinian Christians insist that the real reason is the oppressive conditions of the occupation. Historical records and current experience attest to centuries of peaceful co-existence between Palestinian Muslims, Christians and Jews. In Bethlehem, Muslims even join in Christmas celebrations, since Jesus is a key prophet in Islam.

### ***Palestinian Christians: Pulling beyond their numbers***

Against all odds, the churches of Palestine and Israel maintain a peace witness out of all proportion to their numbers. Palestinian theologians such as Naim Atteek and Mitri Raheb continue to speak and write a gospel-based theology focussed on justice, countering the triumphalistic and militaristic theology of Christian Zionism that brought Deik to tears at the start of his Christian life.

In the last decade, as the military occupation has tightened its grip, articulate spokespersons like Nora Carmi have represented Christian Palestinians internationally, arousing awareness and sympathy for Palestinian people.

Evangelicals like brothers Bishara, Mubarek and Alex Awad—sons of Huda Awad, who taught them forgiveness and reconciliation following the loss of their father to a sniper's bullet in 1948—have worked tirelessly for decades in Christian education and activism among Christians in the West Bank. Others, such as Yohanna Katanacho, teach and write in Israel proper, where Palestinians are Israeli citizens, yet still suffer institutional discrimination in education and housing.

Since 2010, the biennial Christ at the Checkpoint Conference sponsored by Bethlehem Bible College has brought hundreds of church leaders and scholars from around the world and around Israel-Palestine to explore how the gospel speaks prophetically into the realities of the occupation. Last year, 30 North American Mennonites attended.

Then there is Jonathan Kuttab, a Palestinian Anabaptist and prominent human rights lawyer who divides his time between his native Jerusalem and the United States. A graduate of Messiah College in Pennsylvania, he attends Community Mennonite Church in

*(Continued on page 8)*

# Muddying the waters on Israeli divestment

BY WILL BRAUN

Senior Writer

Only one person voted against the Mennonite Church Canada Resolution on Palestine and Israel, but we all know the matter is more complex than that. Some Mennonites and others argue that the resolution is predictably polarizing and strategically bereft. In a spirit of diversity and understanding, I suspended my own bias and sought their views.

Rooted in antiquity, touching the foundations of three major religions, playing against the backdrop of history's most notorious genocide, and fuelled by superpower, it is no wonder the Israel-Palestine conflict has made the Holy Land a burial ground for countless international peace efforts.

From one perspective, Palestine is a terrorism-laced entity dedicated to wiping Israel off the map. Indeed, Hamas, which controls Gaza, is founded on "jihad" against the "Zionist enemy." Palestinian violence is real. In this narrative, Israel is one of the most oppressed minorities in history, fighting for its very existence in a hostile corner of the world. A common refrain is that Palestinian school children are taught to hate Jews.

On the other side, people point to UN condemnation of Israeli settlements. They point to the fact that Israel kills many Palestinians for every Israeli Jew killed. In this narrative, Palestinians are the underdog, pummelled and routinely humiliated by the far-more powerful, western-backed Israelis.

Of course, there is infinitely more to both perspectives.

While the MC Canada resolution leans toward the Palestinian view, Steve McDonald of the Toronto-based Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) told me in a phone interview that Christians are in a good position to serve as bridge-builders since we are neither Jewish nor Muslim. Presumably that means we should primarily locate ourselves somewhere other than

in one narrative.

I contacted three Mennonites who feel the resolution fails to do this. I will not use their names, based on the request of two.

Their main critiques are that the resolution does not adequately acknowledge the Israeli reality, does not grapple honestly with violence perpetrated by Palestinians, and is not a prudent strategy for peace. None of them made their case using biblical arguments in favour of Zionism.

They said, in part:

- **THE RESOLUTION** represents "an expression of unreflective allegiance to a particular polarizing narrative sealed with the metaphorical spilling of some economic blood."
- **BOYCOTTS ARE** like "chasing the wind."
- **WHAT EXACTLY** is the envisioned path to change?
- **"NORTH AMERICANS** are not going to solve this issue."
- **"WE SHOULD** help people on both sides."
- **WHILE MOST** Palestinians want to get on with life, their leaders are invested in ongoing strife.
- **"THE TRIUMPH** of Pauline Christianity was an unmitigated disaster for Judaism . . . [and for indigenous peoples]."
- **"PROGRESSIVE MENNONITES** seem confused by my unapologetic support of Zionism [the right to a Jewish state]. They seem to slot Mennos who are pro-Israel into two derogatory camps: You must be a right-wing fanatic or you must be a Messianic Christian. I am neither. . . . If I lived in Israel, I would be voting Labour and supporting left-wing policies."

In what would be for some a comparable blurring of categories, CIJA—the group that condemned the MC Canada resolution as an act that "speaks to the moral blindness and increasing marginalization of a denomination in decline"—is an

unrestrained advocate of LGBTQ rights.

McDonald told me that boycotts of Israel, which have a history—and connotation—going back to the Nazis, simply do not work. Merchandise exports to the European Union nearly doubled since 2005 when the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaign first coalesced in Europe.

"The only pressure Israel can't resist," he said, "is an embrace," noting that in the 1970s, when Egyptian President Anwar Sadat visited Israel and recognized Israel's right to exist, Israel's right-wing government responded by pulling its military and all settlers out of the Sinai Peninsula.

He said Mennonites should not see the situation as "a zero sum game." Israeli and Palestinian aspirations are interconnected. And he says Christians can help bring sides together.

He said that CIJA supports a solution that would include "statehood and prosperity" for Palestinians, adding that polls have consistently shown a majority of Israelis support peace, a two-state solution and even territorial concessions within the context of a peace agreement that ensures their safety and security. He noted that Israel has put forward three such proposals.

But Israel cannot act alone, he said. After Israel unilaterally withdrew from Gaza in 2005, the vacuum was filled by the openly jihadist Hamas group.

One of the Mennonites I spoke with suggested we should "be trying to muddy the waters a little." Although not an expert in the region, he suggested we support Palestinians who push their leaders toward nonviolence and work with any Israelis opposing military conscription in Israel. He said that "neither of these suggestions represents a fix," but they "[raise] the possibility that love of enemy might supersede considerations of both justice and self-defence."

*For more of Will Braun's interview with Steve McDonald, visit [canadianmennonite.org/mcdonald-interview](http://canadianmennonite.org/mcdonald-interview).*



## VIEWPOINT

# What would you risk for peace?

RACHELLE FRIESEN

In April, more than 1,600 Palestinian political prisoners went on a hunger strike. As I write this article, strikers have refused food and have been drinking only salt water for the last 31 days. They are protesting being held without charge or trial, medical negligence, poor treatment and the lack of family visits. The strikers are putting their bodies at risk to nonviolently protest their treatment; many are experiencing severe fatigue, malnutrition and dizziness.

Throughout Palestine, people are rising up in support of the hunger strike. Nonviolent resistance to the policies of occupation are not new. When I lived and worked in Palestine with Mennonite Central Committee, part of my job was to accompany and support the nonviolent resistance. Every week, activists would protest against the separation barrier in various villages around the West Bank, and every week those same activists were faced with violent repression from the Israeli military, who used tear gas, sound bombs, rubber-coated-steel bullets, live ammunition and beatings by soldiers.

While putting their bodies in danger, they also risked arrest. At the Nakba demonstration in 2015, Mazzen Al Azzah, a friend and nonviolent activist,

was arrested. When he was released, it was on the condition that he would not attend any more demonstrations. When I asked him what he was going to do, his response was, "I will go. I am not afraid. This is part of the struggle."

Martin Luther King Jr. wrote that nonviolent resistance takes "suffering, struggle and sacrifice." Every day I see both Palestinian and Israeli activists live out these three pillars, facing not only imprisonment and death threats but the loss of their very lives.

It is this nonviolence that is supported in the 2016 Mennonite Church Canada Resolution on Palestine and Israel. Yet, while we expect Palestinians and Israelis to take a nonviolent approach to the struggle, I wonder, are we, as Mennonites, willing to do the same?

Are we willing to be called names? Are we willing to lose funding and donations? Are we willing to be isolated within various communities? Are we willing to be denied entry and lose access to space?

One has to admit that these are still very small risks compared to what Palestinians face. But it is hardly ethical to place that expectation on others and not place it on ourselves first.

So I offer this challenge: Are you willing to take the risk and be nonviolent?

The time has come to take up the call of boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) unapologetically. This support means not only condemning the

*Mazzen Al Azzah, left, leads protesters in riding their bicycles on a road designated for Israeli settlers only; he was subsequently arrested. Israel is currently building a segregated road system throughout the West Bank.*

PHOTOS BY RACHELLE FRIESEN



*Palestinians in Hebron protest the closure of Shuhada Street, which used to be a busy Palestinian market. However, Israeli settlers have now taken over the neighbourhood, resulting in the closing of many Palestinian shops and the forbidding of Palestinians from even walking on the street.*

settlements or the occupation; it means the entire BDS framework of liberation is adopted, including:

- **ENDING THE** colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the wall.
- **IMPLEMENTATION OF** "right of return" for Palestinian refugees.
- **ENDING THE** racial discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel.

The framework and narrative for nonviolent resistance has already been created by Palestinian activists who know the path towards liberation. The question remains: Are Mennonites willing to join? ❧

*Rachelle Friesen is the Canada co-ordinator for Christian Peacemaker Teams. Previously, she lived and worked in Palestine with Mennonite Central Committee as the Peace Program co-ordinator. She holds an MA in social and political thought from York University, Toronto.*



*(Continued from page 5)*

Lancaster, Pa., and is helping Mennonite Church U.S.A. prepare to vote on its own resolution on Palestine and Israel in July.

Like his theological compatriots, Kuttab regards the theology of Christian Zionism as unbiblical and running counter to Christian witness. “Western Christians love this interpretation for the same reason others love horoscopes,” he says. “They see today’s events revealed in the Old Testament; they love the prospect of Israel destroying God’s enemies.”

A different theme runs through “A moment of truth: A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering,” a 2009 statement signed by the leaders of all the major Christian churches of the Palestinian territories, including evangelicals. It names the ongoing occupation of the Palestinian territories as a “sin,” and calls on the global church to prayer and nonviolent action toward justice, including through support for the boycott, divest and sanctions movement.

Kuttab highlights one reason why Mennonites should feel a deep affinity with this statement: “All the [signatory churches] are unified in rejecting violence in our struggle. This is the first time since the early church [before Christianity became the official religion of Rome in the fourth century] when the overwhelming majority of Christians in one country have been unified in rejecting violence.”

The statement is a form of resistance distinct from the suicide bombers and rocket attacks that some desperate Palestinians have undertaken—garnering sensational press coverage, currying sympathy for Israel and obscuring the violence of the occupation itself. The goal of the statement is not to oppose the existence of the State of Israel or to single out Judaism; it is to press for a just peace and ultimate reconciliation with Israelis.

### ***Mennonite Church Canada’s response***

The Kairos Palestine call was a key motivation for the crafting of the Palestine and Israel Resolution that was passed last July at the Mennonite Church Canada assembly in Saskatoon. It calls on Canadian Mennonites to pray, learn and

advocate toward a just peace in Palestine and Israel—including through economic pressure and through advocacy among Canada’s politicians.

While the resolution passed handily, the work of followup is ongoing. Last fall, MC Canada appointed a national working group to help facilitate implementation. The seven-member group has compiled recommendations for learning and caring about Palestine-Israel issues, initiated contacts with area church leaders and pastors, led workshops at area church gatherings, and initiated relationships with Jewish and Palestinian communities for dialogue and advocacy.

Palmer Becker, a co-mover of the resolution and the Ontario member of the working group, has developed a four-point PowerPoint presentation and script to be used in adult education efforts to explain the background for the resolution and to help move congregations to awareness, prayer and action.

Jonathan Kuttab is glad that Mennonites are now joining several other North American denominations in heeding the

Kairos Palestine call. At the same time, he recognizes that to take a stand of solidarity with the Palestinian churches is to “go against the grain.” Well-funded lobby groups swiftly—and falsely—label such efforts as anti-Semitic and anti-Israel. People who speak out will receive hate mail, as did the movers of the resolution and MC Canada staff last summer.

But, according to Kuttab, such work is urgently needed. He feels that the real evil in this conflict is the inaction of people who agree that injustice is taking place but do nothing about it. “In today’s world, you can’t just stay out of it,” he says. “The worst you can do is not act. If we are in the world, we need to find ways to be salt and light.” ❧

*Byron Rempel-Burkholder is a member of the Palestine and Israel Resolution Working Group of MC Canada.*

*Visit [canadianmennonite.org/working-group-extras](http://canadianmennonite.org/working-group-extras) for more material.*



### ❧ For discussion

1. What are your sources of information regarding the conflict in Israel/Palestine? What news sources do you trust and which sources do you treat with scepticism? Which side of this conflict do you feel more sympathetic to? What factors have influenced your point of view?
2. What is the relationship between the modern secular State of Israel, and the biblical, covenant people of Israel? Are they the same thing?
3. How should we respond if/when the State of Israel engages in unjust and oppressive policies toward Palestinians? What might the biblical prophets say to this current situation?
4. Palestinian Christians have called the global church to nonviolently oppose the expropriation of lands they have lived on for generations. How should we respond?
5. Has your congregation found the resources offered by Mennonite Church Canada on this topic (*see link below*) to be helpful? What are the major factors causing ongoing conflict? What do you think is the best path towards a peaceful resolution? What role should the church in North America play in promoting peace?

—BY BYRON REMPEL-BURKHOLDER AND BARB DRAPER

See related resources at  
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## VIEWPOINTS

## /// Readers write

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## ✉ Random thoughts from a reader

• **AS I** was reading "Be a CO at tax time," April 10, page 4, I was a little confused. Is Mary Groh encouraging breaking the law in not paying taxes? I know what it means to have a balance with the Canada Revenue Agency. Once it starts calculating daily interest and adding to the balance, it doesn't take long before you could lose your home.

• **IN THE** late 1950s and early '60s, our Mennonite farmers were small producers of grapes in our area. When we asked why, they replied that the grapes from the Mennonites were used in the production of "grape juice," as they didn't want them to be used for wine production. Today, the Mennonites rank with the top producers of grapes for the wine industry.

• **IN SASKATOON** last summer, a resolution against Israel was passed at the Mennonite Church Canada

(Continued on page 10)

## FROM OUR LEADERS

## Don't interrupt me

TIM FROESE

**I**n many busy Canadian families, parents and siblings interrupt each other in mid-conversation. We want to get our point across quickly and efficiently. We want to get stuff done.

Mennonite Church Canada is a busy family of congregations. We have ministry in our neighbourhoods, ill and dying people to attend to, and plans and hopes for our futures. Life is full, and then come the interruptions, like the plea from our Christian brothers and sisters in Palestinian churches "to accelerate the achievement of justice, peace and reconciliation in the Holy Land" (from *A Moment of Truth*).

Jesus was no stranger to interruptions. Much of what we know and appreciate about him is from his life-giving responses to unexpected and often challenging interruptions. One example can be found in Matthew 20:29-34, where Jesus, on his way from Jericho to Jerusalem, is

interrupted by two blind men. To the chagrin of the crowd, these men call out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

Jesus' response teaches us two lessons about our response to the call for support from fellow Christians in Palestine:

• **FIRST, WE** need to be attentive to interruptions. Despite the noise and movement, despite the efforts of the crowds to silence the men, and despite his already busy day, Jesus hears the call of the men, and asks, "What do you want me to do for you?"

The MC Canada 2016 assembly resolution on Palestine and Israel is an effort to listen to the voices that have come to us from beyond our own plans and programs. The voices from Palestine call us, not as a political nor ethnic organization, but as citizens of God's global church and our identity as a peace church. This "interruption" is an opportunity for us to stand with vulnerable and marginalized members of our global church family.

• **SECOND, JESUS'** interruptions provide unique opportunities to reinforce and visualize his teaching, call and identity. On two prior occasions in chapter 20, we find Jesus teaching that "the last will be first." The backdrop for this teaching was Jesus' own impending death. The call to serve is not only for disciples, but for Jesus himself, as "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve." This is what he does for the two blind men.

Throughout the gospel stories, we see Jesus serving the weak, the suffering, the ill and the demonized. While rarely popular by the standards of his day, Jesus' witness grew because of his integrity in combining word and deed, and by fulfilling his mission to serve.

The church and people of Palestine have been suffering greatly for many years under military occupation by the State of Israel. We now have an opportunity to show our commitment to come alongside them in the way and name of Jesus.

*Tim Froese is the executive director of Mennonite Church Canada Witness.*



(Continued from page 9)

assembly without hearing a delegate from Palestine or Israel. How dare we point fingers when we hardly know the facts nor have lived under the constant threat of extinction?

• **WHAT ARE** we doing tearing ourselves apart over homosexuality in Canadian churches while thousands of our Christian brothers and sisters are starving,

raped, killed or driven from their homes by the brutal war in South Sudan?

• **OUR WOMEN** are prepared to march in a demonstration in Washington in support of an agenda based on everything else but the Bible (“Marching in the aftermath of inauguration,” Feb. 13, page 18). How is it that many Mennonites vote for candidates in federal or provincial elections that clearly have an

## FAMILY TIES

# Holy sexuality

MELISSA MILLER

**T**he irony wasn’t lost on me, or on others. At last summer’s Mennonite Church Canada assembly, people discussed, debated and discerned holy sexuality. Specifically, they considered, “Is there space in Mennonite churches for people who are in same-sex relationships?”

The decision by that delegate body—after a six-year, highly participatory process—was yes. Let us provide church space for those who are same-sex attracted; let us accept and live with the differing understandings we have on this aspect of sexuality.

The irony came from one of the gathering’s optional activities: a play in a charming, rural theatre with engaging, talented actors. The plot of yearning and love, and loss and hope, unfolded with heaps of physical and verbal humour. It also included—and here’s the irony—a several-minutes-long scene of simulated sexual intercourse between an unmarried man and a married-to-someone-else woman, what could be called adultery or fornication, even sin.

Yes, it was a farce and wildly unrealistic. I don’t think the play was intended to offer much more than a good laugh, although that could be debated. At the time, I felt mildly disturbed; something made me uncomfortable. Later, I put words to my uneasiness. Acted out on

stage was a quite-obvious depiction of intercourse in a public work of art promoted during a church assembly.

This violated some implicit trust, I felt. Had I missed the “explicit sexual content” warning in the material? Was I right to feel wronged? Did others have a similar reaction? At least one person referred to the play during the next day’s delegate discussion, naming it as sin and tying it to other sexual sins.

What does holy or unholy sexuality look like today? Is it different from the past? How is the church helping or hindering us in becoming holy children of God, reflecting God’s image, particularly in our bodies and with our expressions of sexuality? Where does the Bible help us? And where is it limited? Does a preoccupation with same-sex relationships blind us to attending to sexual ethics for all?

I applaud the brave efforts of pas-



*Does a preoccupation with same-sex relationships blind us to attending to sexual ethics for all?*

tors, parents and youth leaders who do venture into this sacred, fraught space. God knows we cannot depend on our confused, sex-saturated society to lead the way in holy sexual ethics. I do believe, though, that the Bible, taken in context, can help us.

For starters, we can look at the Apostle Paul’s writings. We might not

immediately think he has much to offer. However, his words to the Corinthians are worth pondering. One principle of healthy, holy sexuality is mutuality—respect, desire and pleasure—that is grounded in equality. As Paul says, “*In the Lord, woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman. For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God*” (I Corinthians 11:11-12). And, “*the husband should give to the wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband*” (I Corinthians 7:3).

To return to the play, it appeared that one of the partners had not consented to sexual activity, not in keeping with Paul’s understanding of mutual respect and dignity. Paul clearly understood that Jesus’ self-giving love had created a new power dynamic, erasing domination and manipulation, and levelling formerly divisive categories. In Jesus’ new community, everyone is equal. Jesus ushers in an astounding transformation in all relationships, including those between sexual partners.

Or that’s what Paul earnestly points us toward. We are still trying to live out the

reality of Jesus’ revolution. May we mine the Bible for insights, trust the Spirit’s guidance, and aim to live out holy sexuality as a mirror of God’s love.

*Melissa Miller (familyties@mymts.net) has a passion for helping people develop healthy, vibrant relationships with God, self and others.*

anti-Christian agenda?

Perhaps we need to focus on the mandate of Jesus, and unity may return to us.

ISAAC EITZEN, ST. CATHARINES, ONT.

## ✉ 'At the right place to run into our loving Abba Father's arms'

THANK YOU FOR the "Diversity as a blessing" article by Annette Brill Bergstresser, April 24, page 20.

I love my Anabaptist Mennonites and have been heartbroken for a very long time. I believe the

(Continued on page 12)

## GOD, MONEY AND ME

# It's better to give

WENDY HELGERMAN

**M**y father is a very innovative man. Thirty-three years ago, he started a silo repair business. One of the reasons he is a successful entrepreneur is that he finds solutions to his clients' problems, even if the requests are out of the ordinary.

A couple of years ago, he had the opportunity to be innovative and use some of the spare silo materials he had in storage. For many years, Dad's cousin Lloyd and his wife Earla have been involved in an infrastructure-improvement mission for the Shirati KMT Hospital in Tanzania. In 2010, they started to search for solutions to the hospital's water-storage problem. The hospital pumped water from nearby Lake Victoria, but its water tank was in poor shape and constantly leaked. In 2015, Lloyd approached Dad to help them repair the existing tank.

Dad thought it would be better to build a new one. He had the parts of a Harvestore silo which, in his mind, could be a great solution to their water problem. He discussed the idea with Lloyd, and a new project was born. Dad donated the silo and booked a trip to Shirati.

Mom got involved as well. A container was rented to ship the silo parts to Tanzania, and since there was extra space, they, along with friends, family and church members, donated items for the

hospital and surrounding communities. While Dad built the water tank, Mom gave sewing lessons to women from the area and helped distribute the donated layettes, clothing, toiletries and school supplies.

When my parents came home, their excitement and joy were clear to see. They told us how happy the hospital staff were to have enough water for their daily needs. Dad loved working with the people of Shirati who helped build the tank. "To be there, working side by side with such great people, there's nothing that compares with that," he exclaimed.

Their experience made me think of Acts 20:35: "And I have been a constant example of how you can help those in



*Instead of giving, we can be prone to hold onto things to try to find happiness, but the Bible reveals that real joy is found in being generous.*

need by working hard. You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (NLT).

Columnist Sharon Salzberg writes in *The Real Power of Generosity*: "Generosity generates its power from the gesture of letting go. Being able to give to others shows us our ability to let go of attachments that otherwise can limit our beliefs and our experiences . . . [and we can] carry ourselves to a state of greater freedom. In short, being able to step outside

of oneself and give is an essential ingredient for happiness."

Lloyd had mentioned the needs of Shirati to my parents two years previously, but Dad wasn't interested then. Once he went, however, the experience changed him. It impacted him so much he went back the next year for six weeks, to help the hospital build a new intensive-care unit. My parents have a newfound passion for the people in Shirati. They stay in touch and are dedicated to supporting the community financially.

The fear of not having enough might be holding us back from being generous. Instead of giving, we can be prone to hold onto things to try to find happiness, but the Bible reveals that real joy is found in being generous. It may not make sense that giving up something that is precious to us—our money, possessions or time—can bring us joy. Yet experiences like that of my parents prove that it is true that generosity is not only beneficial to the recipient, but also provides joy to the giver.

Perhaps you've heard this message many times, but haven't tried it for yourself. Give generosity a try, and, without any obligation, let Abundance Canada help!

*Wendy Helgerman is the communications specialist at Abundance Canada. For more information on impulsive generosity, stewardship education, and estate and charitable gift planning, call 1-800-772-3257 or visit abundance.ca.*

*(Continued from page 11)*

Anabaptist Mennonite faith is a very deep well that needs desperately to be cleaned. We believe faith is a relationship between God and ourselves. It never was God, money and ourselves. There is just no room for that.

I believe we have a listening problem. But now, since we have the big problem that we live in a time when sex and feelings scream so loud and tell us it's an unchangeable issue, I believe that we are at the right place to run into our loving Abba Father's arms. And that old rugged cross is still standing and the blood of Jesus heals all the wounds. And I will not give up prayer and hope that we will get up and, even with broken wings, fly to Jesus.

MARLENE HIEBERT, STEINBACH, MAN.

### ✉ Reader seeks information about Mennonite settlers

I HAVE RECENTLY been studying the history of the Mennonite settlers in western Canada, and in particular the displacement of indigenous people that made this settlement possible. Is there any record of spoken or written material about this displacement in any fashion: justification, gratitude, apology, compensation, horror or any other reaction? Or was this topic not considered to be of importance to the settlers? I would appreciate any leads on information anyone might have on this topic.

You can contact me at jof26@shaw.ca.

ORLY FRIESEN, WINNIPEG

### ✉ Memorial cross more important than a new dam

RE: "THEY'RE DESTROYING our home," an online post published in print as "Then the river shall flow again," May 8, page 7.

I agree with this article. Manitoba Hydro should not be affecting people's lives in a negative way to just make a dam. They can find a different way to make energy somewhere else.

"They're destroying our home": this is a perfect title for this article. Their homes are now getting washed away. And it is not fair to the first nations people that they were promised a 25 percent share in the dam and are only getting a 2.17 percent share now, especially because the dam is affecting their lives greatly.

One of the families in the article has a son that died falling through the ice, and his body has still not been found. His memorial is near the place he drowned, which has a cross where they call it "Leon's Island."

This memorial will have to be moved to make way for the water. This is very traumatizing for the family. To move a memorial for your dead son just because of a stupid dam for Manitoba Hydro is very offensive.

Manitoba Hydro is basically saying that their son's death doesn't matter and all it cares about is to make a new dam. Manitoba Hydro should think again before making a decision like this.

This article is a good example of big businesses not caring about anyone but their money and business.

FANE SMEALL, WINNIPEG

### ✉ Be generous because this is a free country

THERE USED TO be a saying, "Money makes the world go round." Maybe.

Paying our taxes and rent is a must. Every year we can donate to the charities of our choice. We must cherish our Mennonite institutions: Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite Disaster Service and missions.

Last year, the CBC reported that Steinbach, Man., residents gave the most to charity per capita: \$1,830 in 2013. That was equal to 6.6 percent of the median total income in the city. (Next was Abbotsford-Mission, B.C., where the median donation was 2.7 percent of incomes.)

Somewhere in Scripture it says that God loves a cheerful giver. Let us be thankful we live in a free country: freedom of choice, freedom of expression, freedom to worship.

JACOB J. UNGER, BOISSEVAIN, MAN.

### /// Milestones

#### Births/Adoptions

**Brett**—Robert Jakob (b. March 23, 2017), to Justyne and Robert Brett, Poole Mennonite, Ont.

**Chapman**—Connor Neil (b. March 15, 2017), to Scott and Michele Chapman, Poole Mennonite, Ont.

**Doell**—Tobin Peter (b. April 25, 2017), to Curtis and Corrina Doell, Foothills Mennonite, Calgary.

**Harms**—Ira John Schellenberg (b. April 29, 2017), to Michael Harms and Heather Schellenberg, Home Street Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Horn**—Aubrey Madelyn (b. May 17, 2017), to Bryan and Casey Horn, Floradale Mennonite, Ont.

**Kroeker**—Olivia Mae (b. May 21, 2017), to Megan and Daniel Kroeker, Morden Mennonite, Man.

**Kuehne**—Quinn Ruth (b. May 23, 2017), to Angela and Matthew Kuehne, First Mennonite, Edmonton.

**Nielsen**—Sylvie Ruth Friesen (b. May 5, 2017), to Kathryn Friesen and Dan Nielsen, First Mennonite, Edmonton.

**St. Onge**—Raphaelle (b. May 5, 2017), to Amelie Fitzgerald Garant and Joseph St. Onge, Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Plett**—Rose Katherina Loewen (b. April 13, 2017), to Annie Loewen and Paul Plett, Home Street Mennonite, Winnipeg.

### Marriages

**Hemingway/Jowett**—Ross Hemingway (Brussels Mennonite, Ont.) and Carol Jowett, at Brussels Mennonite, May 13, 2017.

### Deaths

**Cook**—Tina (nee Bergen), 87 (b. July 8, 1929; d. Feb. 21, 2017), Graysville Mennonite, Man.

**Epp**—Jacob G., 89 (b. Aug. 16, 1927; d. May 17, 2017), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

**Esau**—Kaethe (nee Wiens), 90 (b. May 19, 1926; d. March 19, 2017), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

**Friesen**—Katie, 90 (b. July 31, 1926; d. Jan. 18, 2017), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Funk**—David, 82 (b. May 4, 1935; d. May 20, 2017), Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Hiebert**—Abram, 85 (b. Oct. 24, 1931; d. May 1, 2017), Fort Garry Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Kampen**—John, 81 (b. Nov. 26, 1935; d. May 2, 2017), Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Litwiller**—Elizabeth (Betty) (nee Weber), 88 (b. Nov. 16, 1928; d. May 5, 2017), Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

**Savoie**—Marg, 73 (b. Aug. 9, 1943; d. May 16, 2017), Hamilton Mennonite, Ont.

**Schilk**—Robert, 88 (b. May 24, 1928; d. May 2, 2017), Toronto United Mennonite.

**Schmidt**—Edward Dennis, 82 (b. Nov. 3, 1934; d. May 16, 2017), Zoar Mennonite, Waldheim, Sask.

**Schroeder**—Susanna (nee Penner), 79 (b. Jan. 21, 1938; d. March 18, 2017), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

**Tiessen**—Heinrich, 87 (b. Nov. 10, 1929; d. May 18, 2017), Eben-Ezer Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C.

**Warkentin**—Margaret (nee Gretel), 88 (b. July 2, 1928; d. March 28, 2017), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

**Weber**—Grace (nee Baer), 98 (b. Aug. 20, 1918; d. May 11, 2017), First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

**Wiebe**—Eve Jacqueline, 72 (b. June 28, 1944; d. April 15, 2017), Fort Garry Mennonite, Winnipeg.

### 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.*

## A moment from yesterday



The Hoffnungsfelder Mennonite Church in Rabbit Lake, Sask., 1938. In 1941, 87 percent of Mennonites were rural dwellers. By 1971, the number crashed to 53 percent and has continued to decline. There has been a massive shift in Mennonite communities toward urbanization, bringing with it new challenges and opportunities. New ways are needed to bridge the growing rural-urban divide, evident in voting, social and congregational practices.

Text: Conrad Stoesz / Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies

Photo: C.F. Klassen / Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies



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## LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

# Wisdom, where art thou? (Pt. 9)

TROY WATSON



For centuries, people who questioned the church and its dogma were silenced and at times persecuted. The church coerced the masses to acquiesce to its doctrine by shaming sceptics and denouncing doubters. To say this was wrong would be a colossal understatement.

The truth is, the church needs doubters and sceptics for its own good. Healthy doubt is essential to learning and growing in all areas of life. It is an essential element of genuine faith. It is a gift from God.

Nevertheless, all gifts from God can be misused and abused. When they are, they often cause harm. For example, your sex drive is a gift from God, but I wouldn't advise letting your libido run your life. It's important for most people to have an outlet for Eros; the appropriate outlet is marriage for orthodox Christians. It's equally important to place restraints on sexual impulses in order to live in society. People who don't, often end up in prison. We must bridle our sex drive with self control. When we fail to do this, we risk causing harm to ourselves and others.

The same applies to doubt. It is a gift from God, but we must bridle our doubt with honest intention or we risk causing harm.

The intention of healthy doubt is a desire to understand. With honest intention we ask honest questions; questions that sincerely seek answers; questions we don't already know the answer to, or, if we do, that stem from an openness to answers that differ from our own.

Toxic doubt asks dishonest questions, questions we already know the answer to

and are only asking to ensure others have the "right answer" too. The intent of a dishonest question is usually to make a point rather than to understand other perspectives. Dishonest questions can also be used as a weapon to harm others or to resist truth.

Without the bridle of honest intention, our doubt will turn toxic and bring harm or destruction.

Last year, I realized my doubt had become toxic. Years of inadequately restrained doubt were eroding my faith. I felt this in my heart, I sensed it in my

body, I observed it in my life and ministry. I was experiencing the destructive effects of unbridled doubt firsthand.

Missiologist Alan Hirsch believes that doubt is destroying the western church. In his book *Forgotten Ways*, he describes the church as a movement and then demonstrates how doubt destroys movements by interplaying concepts of movement dynamics with the organizational lifecycle. The descending side of the Bell curve of the organizational lifecycle is marked by several phases of decline and breakdown. When viewed through the lens of movement dynamics, the initial phase of decline is initiated, or accompanied by, operational doubt, followed by ideological doubt and then ethical doubt. The final phase is the death of the movement that is accompanied by absolute doubt.

Hirsch concludes, "Transformative

movements are filled with people who really believe that their message is the answer to the world's problems . . . they believe and they act out of their belief."

I must confess this kind of belief doesn't come naturally to hard-wired doubters like me. Thankfully, in a moment of "prayer-induced" clarity last year, I sensed Christ calling me back to life, breathing his Spirit into the dry bones of my faith with these words: "Trust in me and springs of living water will flow from your heart."

As a Christian, I'm invited to trust and believe in Christ. Not just in his teachings, death and resurrection, but, most importantly, in his living, breathing presence within us and all around us today. When I do, something happens in my heart first, then in my mind.

Divine Spirit revealed my perpetual

*The same applies to doubt. It is a gift from God, but we must bridle our doubt with honest intention or we risk causing harm.*

doubting to be a mind game of mistrust. My doubts had turned my faith into an intellectual puzzle, keeping my faith and relationship with God in my head, so the only things that occasionally changed were my beliefs and ideas. My chronic doubt prevented real transformation from taking place in my heart, attitudes, actions, habits, values and desires.

The remedy for my toxic doubt has been trusting and connecting to the presence of Christ in my heart, soul and body, which, as a result, has renewed my mind. What has been most surprising for me throughout this rekindling of my faith over the past year is how important and powerful "heart connection" is to receiving wisdom.

To be continued . . .

*Troy Watson (troydw@gmail.com) is a recovering toxic doubter.*

## GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

# Prosthetic limb leads to new hope

By DEBORAH FROESE  
Mennonite Church Canada

For 21-year-old Amjad, trauma led to hope and solidified his unwavering faith in God's protection. The Syrian refugee in Ludwigshafen, Germany, lost his leg when a bomb fell on a street in Syria.

Gregory Rabus and his wife, Jennifer Otto, Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers in Ludwigshafen, met Amjad (no last name for security reasons) at Peace House (*Friedenshaus*), a locally initiated ministry at which they help welcome refugees. Rabus describes Amjad as "a quiet and soft-spoken fellow with a bit of a skater vibe. He's the kind of guy you could imagine in a skate park or at a Bruno Mars concert."

But that image belies Amjad's experience.

A few years ago, as the Syrian war raged, Amjad was enrolled in his second year of university, studying to be a train mechanic and grieving the disappearance of his brother, who was incarcerated by the government without explanation. He was also volunteering for the Red Crescent, the Muslim version of the Red Cross, as an emergency paramedic.

In 2013, the Red Crescent responded to an air raid in Aleppo. As Amjad assisted the wounded, another bomb fell. The shrapnel tore through his leg and abdomen, and cut off his toes. Because attending the government-controlled hospital in Aleppo meant risking the draft or incarceration, he was taken to a local clinic. Without the availability of proper equipment or sterilization procedures, a pediatrician sawed off his leg at the ankle. When infection set in, another amputation was performed at the calf, and finally, the thigh.

In the fall of 2015, Amjad headed for Germany, where his sister had gone six months earlier. For 12 days, he struggled towards the Turkish border, alone and

on crutches, sleeping in villages and on the streets along the way. Over the next month, he made his way to Germany with other Syrian refugees, travelling by bus, ferry and train through Turkey, Greece and the Balkans.

On the Greek island of Chios, Amjad met and became close friends with Rias, another Syrian refugee. When the pair arrived in Ludwigshafen in early 2016, Rias discovered Peace House and began taking German lessons from Rabus. In return, Rias taught Rabus Arabic. He also asked Rabus if he could contact a prosthetics doctor on Amjad's behalf. With the translation efforts of both Rias and Rabus, Amjad was able to meet and communicate with the doctor.

Rabus says he has found great joy in the conversations he has since had with Amjad.

"One conversation was about God, and how Amjad wanted to express his faith in God's protection, a remarkable thing for this young man, of all people, to say," Rabus notes. "Another conversation was about Amjad's goals for the future. He was so impressed by the prosthesis practice that he himself would like to be trained in making prosthetics for others."

Rabus says that entering the German job market is extremely difficult for refugees, but Amjad's dream seems to be feasible and realistic, and Amjad visibly lightened up on hearing this. "But before that, he needs training, and before that, he needs to learn German, and before that, he needs a leg."

Amjad now has that leg.

"It's a prayer answered and a beam of hope in this young man's life," Rabus says. "And now life—and German courses—can begin!"

Although Amjad's prospects seem to be moving forward, his family is scattered.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GREGORY RABUS



*Amjad, left, a Syrian refugee to Germany, obtained a prosthetic limb with a little help from Mennonite Church Canada Witness worker Gregory Rabus, right, through Peace Church (Friedenshaus), a collaborative ministry with other Mennonites in Ludwigshafen that he shares with his wife, Jennifer Otto.*

One of his brothers is now in Egypt, and his younger sister and parents are still in Syria.

"Because the lives of so many people we know here are wrought with setbacks, Jen and I are thankful and inspired by this small sign of hope," Rabus says. "We pray for Amjad and for all those who struggle with pain and endless setbacks, that they experience God's grace and love, and can pass it on to others." ❧

*With files from Gregory Rabus.*

CANADIAN MENNONITE



**Do you know of someone in your congregation not getting Canadian Mennonite?**

Ask your church administrator to add them to the list. It is already paid for.

## GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

# Growing leaders in five years

*Youth pastor/worker coaching program is one of area church's hidden gems*

BY LISA WILLIAMS

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada  
KITCHENER, ONT.

“Kenda Creasy Dean writes in one of her books that youth ministry is a spiritual discipline,” says Jean Lehn Epp, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada’s youth pastor/worker coach. “To me, that was eye-opening—my ‘aha!’ moment. I was not just doing youth ministry, but it felt to me that I was embracing ministry.”

Lehn Epp has been involved in youth and family ministry throughout the area church as an ordained minister.

“Someone asked me if I would be interested in being a coach to youth ministers, and I said, ‘Of course! I would love to do that,’” she says. “To me, it feels so natural to coach because it is a culmination of my 19 years of formal ministry. Some people write books and memoirs. This is my memoir!”

The MC Eastern Canada Youth Pastor/Worker Coaching Program supports beginning youth workers/pastors as they

enter their first formal ministry experience and explore their own pastoral identity and vocational calling. Topics include leadership styles, ministry models, youth in crisis, connecting with parents, and visioning.

Lehn Epp leads youth pastors/workers through a visioning process within their churches or support groups, drawing congregational leaders, youth sponsors and youth together. The visioning workshop is based on Corinne Ware’s *Discover Your Spiritual Type* that gets them “doing,” “thinking,” “reflecting” and “feeling.”

“The whole point of youth ministry is that you want the youth to experience all four ways of knowing God,” says Lehn Epp. “Lots of churches are really good at one or two areas and weaker in other areas. It’s affirming to see where strengths are, as well as how weaker areas might be



MC EASTERN CANADA PHOTO

*Jean Lehn Epp, centre, leads youth pastors/workers through a visioning process within their church or support group, drawing congregational leaders, youth sponsors and youth together.*

strengthened.”

She works one on one with youth pastors/workers and in group settings. Sometimes individuals do not feel that they have the time for a full year of youth ministry coaching, especially since many youth pastors are working limited hours per week. She tailors the program to the needs of the congregation and the youth minister.

“A lot of youth ministers have fallen into their positions,” she says. “Congregations often hire people because they are young and grew up in the church, or have worked at camp. That’s great, but often they aren’t really equipped for ministry.”

Lehn Epp has coached young youth ministers and older youth ministers, as well as youth ministers who have a degree and are looking for more support and resources.

“Supporting youth workers with a coaching relationship is really supporting the whole congregation,” she says. “In five years [often the number of years that a youth is in a youth group] there can be a lot of intentional ministry happening. It doesn’t matter who is doing the youth ministry as long as they can reflect intentionally about what they are actually doing with youth ministry. We grow leaders in five years!” ☞

*Anyone interested in youth ministry coaching can contact Henry Paetkau, area church minister, at [hpaetkau@mcecc.ca](mailto:hpaetkau@mcecc.ca).*



## /// Staff changes

### Pastoral transitions in Ontario

• **RONALD AU** began as the Cantonese pastor at Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church on April 1. The congregation worships in Cantonese, Mandarin and English, with pastors for each language group. Born in Hong Kong, Au ran a small business in Toronto. He received a call from God in 2003 and served as a Mandarin pastor at Charis Evangelical Free Church from 2015. He is a graduate of Toronto Baptist Seminary and Bible College, from which he received a bachelor of theological studies degree. While he has eaten snake, his favourite food is coffee and doughnuts.

• **PAUL ADAMS** began as the interim supply minister at St. Catharines United Mennonite Church on March 28. Adams is a trained spiritual director and previously pastored at Tavistock (Ont.) Mennonite Church.

—BY DAVE ROGALSKY



CENTRE FOR MENNONITE BROTHERS STUDIES PHOTO



When Jeremy Wiebe heard that the remaining inventory of *Mennonites in Canada* (Vols. 1–3) were in danger of being shredded to save warehouse storage fees, he took action.

## PhD student saves 'history' from the shredder

By CONRAD STOESZ

Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies  
WINNIPEG

When Jeremy Wiebe heard that the remaining inventory of *Mennonites in Canada* (Vols. 1–3) were in danger of being shredded to save warehouse storage fees, he took action. Using his computer programming skills and an offer from the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies to take care of transportation to Winnipeg, storage and shipping, Wiebe established a web store with e-commerce capabilities that went live on April 12.

Wiebe's idea was pitched at the January meeting of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, which had been looking for a way to sell its remaining copies of the *Mennonites in Canada* volumes.

The three volumes—1,500 pages in total—are widely recognized as the definitive history of the Mennonite experience in Canada from 1786 to 1970. The first two volumes, published in 1974 and 1982,

were authored by Frank H. Epp; the third volume was written by Ted Regehr and published in 1996.

Wiebe, a Mennonite history student in graduate studies at the University of Waterloo, Ont., is not surprised by the response. "An entire generation has come of book-buying age since the last volume was published," he says. "It would be a shame to see the books destroyed when there are people who would be thrilled to own this history of the Mennonite experience." ❧

To order, visit [mennonitesincanada.ca](http://mennonitesincanada.ca). For orders outside Canada, email [cmbs@mbchurches.ca](mailto:cmbs@mbchurches.ca) for a quote on shipping costs.



### ❧ Briefly noted

#### Seminar brings biblical women to life

WINNIPEG—Mennonite Women Manitoba's "Women Encountering Jesus" seminar, held late last month at Bethel Mennonite Church, took a fresh look at alternative prayer practices old and new, from journalling and art to lectio divina and walking a labyrinth. To illustrate another practice, volunteer actors from the congregation brought female figures from the Bible and early church history to life, illustrating another practice called "making friends" with biblical figures. Telling their stories in new words, courtesy of featured speaker and spiritual director Laura Funk, the women brought depth and nuance to stories grown perhaps too familiar, reminding those gathered that the "great cloud of witnesses" still have much to teach us and real spiritual companionship to offer. The group also shared in worship, food and personal storytelling.

—STORY AND PHOTO  
BY BETH DOWNEY SAWATZKY



Working with modelling clay was a prayer practice offered at the Manitoba women's seminar.

## /// Briefly noted

### Peacebuilder Joji Pantoja honoured again

Joji Pantoja's commitment to developing a culture of peace through entrepreneurship in the Philippines just garnered her another award. The University of Santo Tomas (UST) College of Education and the UST College of Education Alumni Foundation in Manila recognized Pantoja as an "outstanding alumna." The award was granted for "her exemplary and inspirational track record as an entrepreneur advocating for inclusive business practices" through Coffee for Peace. Coffee for Peace, in part, fosters reconciliation in a country rife with conflict over land issues by supporting the development of peace and reconciliation (PAR) teams, whose members are trained to be agents of peace and reconciliation in their communities. Founded by Pantoja, Coffee for Peace emerged through the work of Peacebuilders Community, Inc., a ministry supported by Mennonite Church Canada. Investors in the Coffee for Peace business have agreed that 25 percent of their net profit will be donated to Peacebuilders Community Inc. to support the PAR teams. Peacebuilders plans to establish a PAR team in each of country's 81 provinces by 2020. Pantoja graduated from UST in 1979. In March, she finished preparing her thesis, "Establishing Coffee for Peace communities in strategic areas in the Philippines," for the Ateneo Graduate School of Business.

—Mennonite Church Canada



Joji Pantoja

## /// Briefly noted

### Dialogues on baptism close with learning and prayer

Representatives of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the Lutheran World Federation and Mennonite World Conference met in Augsburg, Germany, earlier this year for the fifth and final yearly meeting of the Trilateral Dialogue Commission on Baptism. The commission discussed and developed its final report, entitled "Baptism and incorporation into the body of Christ, the church," drafted by professors Theo Dieter (Lutheran, France), William Henn (Catholic, U.S./Vatican) and John Rempel (Mennonite, Canada). The trilateral commission agreed on a further process to finalize the report, which summarizes the discussions that have taken place on three fundamental themes: the relation of baptism to sin and salvation; the celebration of baptism and its relation to faith and to membership in the Christian community; and the living of baptism in Christian discipleship. The report will be published in early 2018. Rempel said of the process: "From the Lutherans, I have seen more clearly that their concern about justification by grace through faith is not that discipleship is a secondary matter. Their concern is that following Christ be a lifestyle of gratitude for God's grace, and not good works to earn God's favour. From the Catholics, I have learned that the sacrament of baptism does not have an 'automatic' role in salvation. If someone persistently lives life against the Spirit of Christ, baptism will not save them. What did I realize about Mennonites from the observations of our dialogue partners? One insight is that our concern for the human response to God's grace in conversion and baptism is so central that we neglect to give God's initiative toward us its due."

—Mennonite World Conference

## /// Briefly noted

### Saskatchewan youth honour the earth all night

Honouring the Earth, an annual Saskatchewan Mennonite Youth Organization event, took place April 18 and 19, in partnership with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Saskatchewan and Rosthern Junior College (RJC). The event started at MCC Saskatchewan in Saskatoon with workshops and discussion around what it might mean to be a refugee, and how to make choices when the cost is something greater than money. Youth were then challenged by Jamal Tekleweld from the Sanctuary Saskatoon Alliance to take these lessons and consider what it might mean to make Saskatoon a "sanctuary city." The fun continued at RJC all night, with a murder mystery led by Ric Driediger, midnight glow bowling and a surprise hot tub. Games of all shapes and sizes were played throughout the night, sometimes with one eye open, but there were always snacks when extra sustenance was needed. Sleep was had by some, fun was had by all.

—STORY AND PHOTO  
BY KIRSTEN HAMM-EPP



*Ric Driediger, right, leads participants in the Saskatchewan Mennonite Youth Organization's Honouring the Earth event in solving a murder mystery.*

CANADIAN  
MENNONITE



Do you know of someone in your congregation not getting Canadian Mennonite?

Ask your church administrator to add them to the list. It is already paid for.

## GOD AT WORK IN US

## OBITUARY

# A man of 'Christian faith and its joys and struggles'

Alan F. Kreider

Nov. 8, 1941 – May 8, 2017

By ANNETTE BRILL BERGSTRESSER

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary  
ELKHART, IND.

**T**ributes and testimonials in honour of Alan F. Kreider, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) professor emeritus of church history and mission, and a long-time mission worker in England, have been pouring in via the seminary's Facebook page and alumni Facebook group since his death on May 8. Kreider, 75, died peacefully in the presence of his family at his home in Goshen, Ind., after having been diagnosed with multiple myeloma last December.

Qualities emerging consistently in comments honouring Kreider include his deep joy and irrepressible enthusiasm, hope-filled faith, warmth, gentleness, generosity, thoughtfulness, patience, humility and humour. To many who wrote to share their condolences and reflections, Kreider embodied hospitality and welcome, attentiveness and genuine concern for others as he shared his love for Jesus.

Kreider taught at AMBS as adjunct professor in church history and evangelism from 1999 to 2004, and half-time as a professor of church history and mission from 2004 until his retirement in 2009. He continued to teach occasional AMBS courses and independent studies in retirement while also pursuing his interests in research and writing.

Prior to coming to AMBS, he and Eleanor, his wife, served from 1974 to 2000 in England with the Mennonite Board of Missions. During this time, the Kreiders directed the London Mennonite Centre (1974 to 1991), helping shape it into a teaching and resource centre of urban mission,



PHOTO BY JOE RAYMOND

*Eleanor and Alan Kreider are pictured at an event co-sponsored by Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in honour of Martin Luther King Jr. Day in January 2013.*

conflict mediation and Christian discipleship in the Anabaptist tradition. Kreider also served as director of the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture at Regent's Park College, Oxford University (1995 to 2000); as an itinerant preacher and speaker; and as a founder of the Anabaptist Network in England. Following their return to the U.S. in 2000, the Kreiders served with Mennonite Mission Network as international mission educators until he joined the AMBS faculty in 2004.

According to Rebecca Slough, the AMBS dean, the school community benefited greatly from Kreider's wealth of experience as a teacher in settings across the world as well as a missionary, preacher, scholar and host. "His intellectual pursuits were interwoven with his ministry, looking to what the church needs to hear or recover from

its past for the sake of its present mission," she said, noting that while it is common in scholarship to define and focus on one specialty, his interests ranged widely.

Ted Koontz of Elkhart, professor emeritus of ethics and peace studies, counted Kreider not only a colleague but also a friend, mentor and guide. "Alan was ready—eager—to listen and to share truthfully and passionately about what matters most: Christian faith and its joys and struggles," Koontz said. "What struck me most was that his faith was not Pollyanna-ish. He saw clearly that there is much to discourage and grieve us, but he was nevertheless joyful, hopeful and filled with gratitude."

Sara Wenger Shenk, AMBS's president, spoke of experiencing Kreider's infectious gratitude for life when he came to worship and say farewell to his home congregation, Prairie Street Mennonite Church in Elkhart, near the end of April: "Though frail in body, he beamed joy! No one else, in my experience, has so personified the sweet, vitalizing fruits of the Spirit as scholar, preacher, teacher, peace evangelist, mentor and love-struck disciple of Jesus. From our early years in Europe to the present, he and his amazing soul-mate, Ellie, have called out the best of faith, hope and love in Gerald and me, as in so many around the world."

Kreider earned a doctorate in English history from Harvard University in 1971 and a BA from Goshen College in 1962. He also studied at Heidelberg (Germany) University and Princeton University.

Among his many published works are the books *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire* (Baker Academic, 2016); *Worship and Mission After Christendom* (Paternoster, 2009), with Eleanor Kreider; *A Culture of Peace: God's Vision for the Church* (Good Books, 2005), with Eleanor Kreider and Paulus Widjaja; *Composing Music for Worship* (Canterbury Press, 2003), co-edited with Stephen Darlington; *The Origins of Christendom in the West* (T. & T. Clark, 2001); and *Coming Home: Stories of Anabaptists in Britain and Ireland* (Pandora Press, 2000) co-edited with Stuart Murray. ❧

## END OF SCHOOL ROUNDUP

# A long and winding history

Rare 1564 *Ausbund* restored for Mennonite Historical Library

BY ERVIN BECK

Goshen College  
GOSHEN, IND.

The Mennonite Historical Library at Goshen College owns the world's only surviving copy of the first printing, in 1564, of songs that eventually became the *Ausbund*, one of the first Anabaptist songbooks and the Protestant hymnal in longest continuous use, by the Old Order Amish.

The book has had a colourful journey over the past 450 years. Its survival is due in part to an unknown owner who, around 1700, chose to put the Passau hymns together with other small song pamphlets into a single binding. Before that binding was 100 years old, it probably had made its way across the ocean to Pennsylvania.

In 1928, while browsing in a rare book store in Harrisburg, Pa., H.S. Bender, founder of the library and then-professor and later dean at Goshen College, discovered this printing of the 53 hymns composed by Anabaptist prisoners in Passau, Germany. However, it was contained in a binding that included other early texts.

According to the story, since he could not afford to buy the entire book, the bookseller offered to sell the part that had the Passau hymns to Bender, keeping the rest. Bender paid \$10 US for the hymns that were composed by communitarian Anabaptists when they were expelled from Moravia and imprisoned in 1535 in the dungeon of the castle at Passau, on the Rhine River.

Later, he was indeed able to buy the other half of the volume. For 15 years, both parts languished, separated, in the library, until Robert Friedmann, a scholar of Jewish background who found work in the Goshen College library after fleeing Nazi

Austria, "discovered" them and re-joined them.

In 2015 a library patron offered to pay for conserving and re-joining the two parts into a sturdy, single volume, or *sammelband*, again. That work was done by Jeffrey Peachey, a 1988 Goshen College graduate now working as a bookbinder in New York City.

"This simple volume offers an unlikely but tangible link between that time and our own," says Joe Springer, the library's curator. "The earthly future imaginable to



These photos show the 1564 edition in its former mutilated condition (above) and in its newly conserved condition (below).



the prisoners who first composed its texts was short; that some of their texts would still echo nearly five centuries later, unimaginable." ❧

## ❧ Briefly noted

### Wenger Shenk reappointed for third term as AMBS president

ELKHART, IND.—Sara Wenger Shenk, EdD, has been reappointed president of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary for a third four-year term, beginning July 1, 2018. A Presidential Review Committee formed by the AMBS Board recommended her reappointment. According to AMBS board chair Bruce Baergen of Edmonton, the committee's extensive review process included surveying members of the seminary's constituencies in Canada and the U.S., as well as on-campus stakeholders. "Sara's leadership during her first two terms has been exemplary," says Baergen. "She has helped to enable faculty and staff to work well together, and continues to inspire great work by those around her. The seminary and larger church have been gifted with a truly remarkable leader, and we look forward to continuing that work together." Wenger Shenk says she was "surprised and humbled" by the renewed invitation to serve AMBS's mission. "I love this work; the spiritually mature learning community that is AMBS; and the ways in which we partner with wonderful people throughout Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church U.S.A. to provide biblical, theological grounding for the whole church during this fractious time, and to educate leaders for God's reconciling mission in the world." Wenger Shenk joined AMBS as president in the fall of 2010.

—Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary



Sara Wenger Shenk

# AMBS grads called to engage the 'whole of life'

BY ANNETTE BRILL BERGSTRESSER

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

Mary H. Schertz encouraged Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) graduates, including Canadian Lee Allan Hiebert of Winnipeg, to hold close “the weariness and wonder of the world and the sorrow and joy of human being” in her commencement address on May 20 at College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind.



**Lee Allan Hiebert of Winnipeg**

“And there, in whatever exciting thing you do next . . . you will meet the face and grace of God,” she told them. “You will find sturdy hope; you will find the joy of being a disciple; you will find ways to witness to the dawn breaking upon us from on high.”

Schertz, a professor of New Testament at AMBS, connected Mary’s Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) and Zechariah’s Song (Luke 1:68-79) with a phrase from a prayer in the Anabaptist Prayer Book—“the deepest blue of world and soul”—which she described as “that elusive, ever-changing blue beauty after the stars fade, or before they emerge.”

“This deepest blue of world and soul is not something you can keep separate from you,” she said. “It fills the universe, and because you are a part of the universe, it fills you, too.”

Schertz pointed out that both Mary and Zechariah emerge from their experiences of “deepest blue” with life-changing revelations: “Whereas Mary’s song about her child imagines a world free from oppression and hunger, Zechariah’s song about his child imagines a world free to worship and serve the Lord without fear.”

Schertz recalled her last conversation with Alan Kreider, beloved AMBS professor emeritus of church history and mission, who passed away on May 8. He had

encouraged her to tell this year’s graduates “to love the Bible.”

“Keep hanging out with Mary and Zechariah and all the others,” Schertz told the graduates. “Keep probing these mysteries, praying these psalms, telling these stories. Keep loving these words, because they are themselves the deepest blue of world and soul . . . containing the whole of life, and offering for the whole of life, epiphany and revelation, continuing and ever new.”

Canadian Allan Rudy-Froese, associate professor of Christian proclamation at AMBS, presented the charge to the graduates, building on Schertz’s colourful imagery and urging them to use all of their senses in engaging and experiencing God’s goodness and colour-saturated creation without fear.

“The God who speaks in blue and brown and gray and green created us with deep rivers that run through our bodies—red rivers, red blood,” he said. “Bring your bodies, your love, your passion, your anger . . . bring your red to those places that need to stop—or start—and do it in the name of the one who loved, to death.”

The graduates responded with a litany



*Mary H. Schertz, professor of New Testament, gives the address at the 2017 commencement ceremony of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind. Behind Schertz are Sara Wenger Shenk, left, and Rebecca Slough, AMBS’s president and academic dean, respectively.*

that included the refrain, “We will not fear,” and came forward to place pieces of fabric in varied deep colours among the candles at the front of the worship space.

The commencement service honoured 21 graduates, including 11 who earned their master of divinity degree. ❧

## ❧ Staff change

### MCI announces next principal

• **BERNIE LOEPPKY** has been named the new principal of Mennonite Collegiate Institute (MCI) in Gretna, Man., effective July 2. Loepky brings a wealth of experience, making him an ideal candidate to lead MCI forward. After graduating from the University of Manitoba in 1980, he began his teaching career in the Garden Valley School Division. He has also served with Mennonite Central Committee in Nova Scotia and Pennsylvania. Loepky’s teaching experience has been broad; from math to Bible; music to phys ed; art to German. He has been a part-time guidance counsellor and has coached many sports. He has been active with school dramas, outdoor club and yearbook. Having taught at MCI for three years, he already knows the school well.

—Mennonite Collegiate Institute



## END OF SCHOOL ROUNDUP

# New Fretz Fellowship honours Grebel's founding president

Conrad Grebel University College  
WATERLOO, ONT.

A strategic plan vision has been realized at Conrad Grebel University College with the creation of the new J. Winfield Fretz Fellowship in Mennonite Studies.

The Fellowship, to be awarded annually, will support visiting scholars as they engage in research, teaching and relationship building between Grebel and academic

and community audiences around Anabaptist and Mennonite studies themes. Funding from the Fellowship will also provide support for special projects at the college initiated by the Institute of Anabaptist and Mennonite Studies.



**Aileen Friesen**

Aileen Friesen of Waterloo, an emerging scholar in the field of Russian Mennonite history, with an emphasis on religion in the Russian empire, is the inaugural recipient of the Fretz Fellowship. She completed her doctorate at the University of Alberta and has held post-doctoral positions at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the University of Winnipeg.

In 2016, Friesen gave the inaugural lecture at the Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg on the topic of "Indigenous-Mennonite relations in the Russian empire." She is currently working on

projects related to the 1920s emigration of Mennonites from the Soviet Union, and on Mennonite-Muslim relations in Russia.

The Fellowship program emerges from the J. Winfield Fretz Endowment in Mennonite Studies that was established in 1999 by then president John E. Toews. For the past couple of decades, the endowment has supported a range of Anabaptist and Mennonite studies activities at Grebel. New and generous donations have grown the fund to the point at which a formal Fellowship program is possible. The Fretz Fellowship holder will utilize the unique and significant historical collections in the Milton Good Library and the Mennonite Archives of Ontario at Grebel.

"The 2013 expansion of our library and archives has allowed for new program initiatives in research and teaching on Anabaptists and Mennonites," says Professor Marlene Epp, dean of the college. "Dr. Friesen's expertise will help to highlight our growing collection in Russian Mennonite history in the coming year. We are also excited about the future potential for college-initiated projects supported by the Fellowship."

The Fretz Endowment was established to recognize Grebel's first president, J. Winfield Fretz, whose scholarship on the sociology of Mennonites had a significant impact around the world. ❧

## /// Staff change

### Columbia Bible College appoints new academic dean

• **GIL DUECK**, a PhD candidate at Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, Holland, will assume the role of academic dean at Columbia Bible College in Abbotsford, B.C., beginning Aug. 1. Dueck has considerable experience in a Bible college setting, having served as an associate dean of students, an instructor in theology, and academic dean at Bethany College in Hepburn, Sask., from 2003 to 2015. He has a deep desire to see young adults grow and develop as Christ-followers, as evidenced by his PhD dissertation topic, "Emerging adult faith development." He sums up his call to serve in a Bible college setting as follows: "I am motivated by a pastoral burden for young adults coming of age in the midst of a uniquely challenging cultural moment and I have seen the positive impact that a formative Bible college experience can have at this stage of the journey. I am also convinced that the church's mission includes theological education and leadership formation, and I am committed to advocating for these priorities in a spirit of collaboration and attentiveness to the experience of local churches."

—Columbia Bible College



## /// Staff changes

### Interim leaders for EMS, graduate school chosen

HARRISONBURG, VA.—Several changes in leadership to Eastern Mennonite Seminary (EMS) and the School of Graduate and Professional Studies begin on July 1. These changes come in the wake of the March 13 retirement announcement of Michael A. King, current vice-president and dean of EMS and the School of Graduate and Professional Studies. King's tenure, which included oversight of programs offered at the Harrisonburg campus and Lancaster (Pa.) site, will end June 30. Fred Kniss, provost, will become interim dean of the seminary. Sue Cockey, associate dean of the School of Graduate and Professional Studies, will move into the school's interim dean position. Nancy Heisey will continue in her role as the seminary's associate dean, which she has held since August 2016. Eastern Mennonite University's School for Graduate and Professional Studies serves more than 400 students in 11 programs at the Harrisonburg campus and in Lancaster.

—Eastern Mennonite University



**Fred Kniss**



**Sue Cockey**

## END OF SCHOOL ROUNDUP

## /// Staff change

**Schultz Huxman invested as EMU's ninth president**

• **SUSAN SCHULTZ HUXMAN** was welcomed as the ninth president of Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va., on April 7 by some 500 voices who joined in a litany of investiture for her. The confirming confluence of diverse voices was one of those “beautiful and brazen ‘Behold!’” moments that Huxman spoke about in her inaugural address, as “an awesome mystery . . . something really unusual and unconventional unfolding before you.” The choice of Huxman, the university’s first permanent female president, to represent EMU’s educational mission on the local, national and international stage in working towards peace, racial reconciliation and restorative justice, is significant, said Deanna R. Reed, Harrisonburg’s mayor, framing the university’s unique role as “the very moral compass which a vast number of residents reference for social, political and spiritual wisdom and guidance.” A family legacy of leadership in Anabaptist higher education was affirmed in an introductory address by her father, Harold J. Schultz, president emeritus of Bethel (Kan.) College. Anabaptist institutions have, through their graduates, a “multiplier effect,” a cloud of “living epistles” who “make a difference, no matter where they live,” he said. “Beware, students, if you come to EMU, there is both a promise and a warning that you risk becoming a changed person.” Shultz Huxman was previously the president of Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont.



**Susan Schultz Huxman**

—Eastern Mennonite University

## /// Staff change

**Marcus Shantz to be new Grebel president**

• **MARCUS SHANTZ** will serve as Conrad Grebel University College’s eighth president, taking office on Oct. 1. Like the local Mennonite church and business leaders who founded Grebel more than 50 years ago, Shantz embodies a vision for an innovative partnership between the college, the University of Waterloo, the Mennonite church and the local community. Shantz is a well-respected leader in the Region of Waterloo in his current role as president of Mercedes Corp., a property management company based in St. Jacobs. As a civic leader, he has been board chair of Centre-in-the-Square and Silver Lake Mennonite Camp, and has served on the boards of Ten Thousand Villages and Grebel. He has also held leadership roles at Rockway Mennonite Church in Kitchener and Mennonite World Conference. After completing a BA in religious studies and history with a peace and conflict studies minor at the University of Waterloo, Shantz received a juris doctor degree from the University of Toronto Faculty of Law and then practised law. As an alumnus of Grebel and the University of Waterloo, Shantz has a deep understanding and appreciation for Grebel’s contributions and potential. Shantz will lead Grebel to fulfill the vision of its current strategic plan, “Extending the Grebel Table.” The priorities are to engage Grebel’s growing constituencies; enhance campus facilities; elevate and expand distinctive programs; enrich and empower faculty, staff and partners; and advance the core relationships of the college with the University of Waterloo and its affiliated institutions and the Mennonite church. Jim Pankratz has served as Grebel’s interim president since October 2016.



—Conrad Grebel University College

## /// Briefly noted

**Alumni award winner inspires young musicians**

WATERLOO, ONT.—Since graduating a decade ago, Amanda Kind has grown into an inspirational leader for young performers. In recognition of her generous and dedicated service, Conrad Grebel University College has named her the 2017 Distinguished Alumni Service Award winner. A Waterloo-based singer, songwriter, actor and vocal coach, Kind is involved with many groups, including KW Musical Productions and Drayton Entertainment, where she works as the marketing manager. She is also the artistic director and co-founder of KW Glee, a pop-rock choir for performers aged 9 to 19, and has received numerous awards for her work. “When I was a teenager, I was desperate for opportunities to sing and learn about the performing arts,” she says. “I feel the need to create the opportunities, and provide the support and education that I wish I could have had at that critical time in my life.” She is very positive about her experience at Grebel. “I feel incredibly blessed to have landed at Grebel because the entire college—and especially the music department—was very liberal and accepting of all styles,” she says. “Many of the teachers in the music department, and particularly my voice teacher, Stephanie Kramer, have become lifelong mentors to me.” Since graduating, Kind has remained connected to Grebel, meeting and motivating current music students. “Be diverse,” she advises them. “Get as much experience as possible and constantly upgrade your skills. The journey is as important as the end result.”



**Amanda Kind**

—Conrad Grebel University College

## ARTBEAT

# So every creature can sing

*Faith-based creation care curriculum now available with a Canadian focus*

Mennonite Church Canada / Mennonite Creation Care Network

If you find the notion of caring for and healing creation formidable—or even hopeless—Mennonite Creation Care Network has a resource that just might change your perspective.

With an accessible approach that draws upon science and faith, the Network has shaped a special 13-week creation-care curriculum around biblical teachings. The original edition of *Every Creature Singing* was directed towards an American audience, but with support from the Network and Mennonite Central Committee Canada, Mennonite Church Canada has adapted it for Canadians.

*Every Creature Singing* emerged in

PHOTO FROM EVERY CREATURE SINGING



response to a Mennonite Church U.S.A. resolution passed in July 2013, to study creation care within American ecological and social contexts.

“We didn’t just want to pass another statement; we wanted to call people to a personal response,” says Jennifer Schrock, who developed and wrote the original curriculum. “And so we proposed that Mennonite churches study creation care within their own context. The resolution passed, and therefore we took the responsibility to develop a curriculum.”

*Every Creature Singing* isn’t strongly prescriptive, so congregations or study groups can shape sessions to meet their needs and their resources, and pick and choose from among them. Each session has four components:

- “**ECOLOGICAL LENS**” questions enabling a closer look at creation care through biblical texts.
- A **LOCAL** ecosystem focus to familiarize participants with the environment in their

local community.

- **SUGGESTED SPIRITUAL** practices such as prayers, meditations and Bible studies.
- **SUGGESTED HOUSEHOLD** practices that range from learning where food comes from to reducing consumption and replenishing natural habitats.

“Jennifer did an amazing job with this curriculum,” says Deborah Froese, MC Canada’s director of news services, who oversaw the Canadian adaptation. “It’s rooted in biblical perspectives of creation and supported with biblical stories. It approaches the topic of creation care with an attitude that embraces social justice and faith, and, at the same time, incorporates a can-do attitude. This is encouraging, uplifting study material.”

Matthew Veith, designer for the Canadian edition, says the task of inviting people into the environmental stewardship conversation can be daunting, but the curriculum provides a variety of practical ways for people to respond. One of the biggest challenges he faced in the design process was incorporating the digital elements in a way that would reflect “readability and engagement, not trend and kitsch.”

“I’m confident that more people will use the curriculum because of its added accessibility,” Veith says, “and I’m hopeful they will find it easy to navigate and easy on the eyes as well.”

“I think this is such a wonderful resource,” says Joanne Moyer, assistant professor of environmental studies and geography at the King’s University in Edmonton and a member of the Network’s council. She commends Schrock for weaving Anabaptist theology and peace commitments together with new ideas about watershed discipleship and caring for creation.

“I am so pleased to see a version of this curriculum that speaks specifically to the Canadian context,” says Schrock. “I hope the curriculum helps people encounter the Spirit of Jesus Christ and experience God’s love of all creation.”

*Every Creature Singing is available for download at [commonword.ca/go/1054](http://commonword.ca/go/1054).*



# New book an aid to 'identity formation'

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
KITCHENER, ONT.

Palmer Becker's "little book," *What Is an Anabaptist Christian?* has been translated into many languages and used globally. But as he taught from it in various places around the world, it became apparent that a longer version would be welcome.

To that end, *Anabaptist Essentials* was published by Herald Press last year after testing in his home congregation of Waterloo North Mennonite Church. Mennonite Church Eastern Canada sent a copy home with each congregation after its annual church gathering in April.

At the official May 24 book launch in Kitchener, David Martin, MC Eastern Canada's executive minister, said that this is "a critical book [since] a strong theological and biblical identity is needed in this post-Christian society." He said he is personally "troubled by congregations with only historical markers" of Anabaptism like clothing, ethnicity and family connections. This book, he said, helps congregations and individuals to be explicit about their faith, "so we know who we are



Palmer Becker, standing, visits with John D. Roth, Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Faith and Life Commission secretary, left, and César García, MWC general secretary, at the launch of *Anabaptist Essentials* on May 24 in Kitchener, Ont.

and show that to others. It aids in identity formation."

César García, general secretary of Mennonite World Conference (MWC), said at the launch that plans are to immediately translate this book into French and Spanish, MWC's other two official languages, and to give a copy to the leaders of each of the 105 member conferences next year. The goal is for Anabaptists all over the world "to appreciate Anabaptist contributions to their faith, and to share them" with others, he said. A gift from a donor means that this is already in process. Then the hope is to get this book into the hands of local church leaders for their personal learning, who can use it to teach their congregations.

The book is imagined as a semester of study with 13 chapters, beginning with an introduction and a short Anabaptist-influenced history of Christianity. The following nine chapters are broken into three sections focussing on "Jesus the centre of our faith"; "Community the centre of

our life; and "Reconciliation the centre of our work." It concludes with a chapter on the place of the Holy Spirit in Anabaptist Christianity, and a concluding reflection on "Anabaptist essentials."

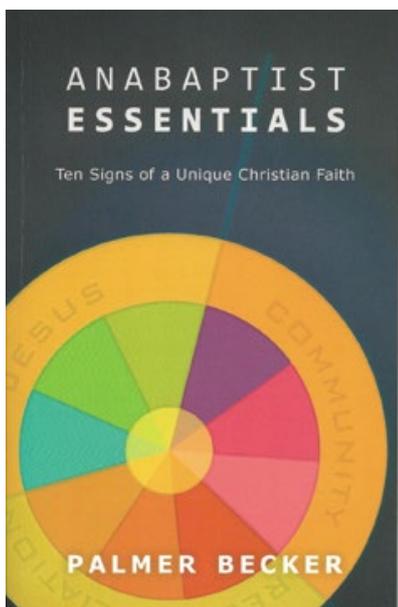
Each chapter ends with a few reflection and discussion questions. These always include a chart of comparisons between what "many Christians emphasize" and what "Anabaptist Christians emphasize." In the chapter on "Jesus is Lord," the comparisons include "Accepting Jesus as Saviour" versus "Accepting Jesus as Lord and Saviour," noting that Anabaptists emphasize following Jesus in this life, and not only hoping for salvation in the next life.

*Anabaptist Essentials* would be a good book to study with new members and baptismal candidates. The language is set for mid-high school.

After Becker's initial draft, editors criticized the lack of women and non-North American scholars cited in his writing, so a major rework added these important voices to support his ideas.

This is a book of strengths and weaknesses. Simple language and brevity make it approachable by many, and yet can rob some concepts of their depth. While the comparison charts and other graphics have been praised by Randell Neudorf of the Commons, an MC Eastern Canada congregation in Hamilton, such comparisons can lead to feelings of superiority and exclusivism in a time that is seeing decreasing denominational loyalty or meaning by many.

The addition of a chapter on the place of the Holy Spirit is very welcome. Becker noted that the Anabaptists were the charismatic of the 16th century, and many Anabaptist groups and congregations in the Global South are very charismatic in worship and teaching today. ❧






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## Staff change

### Brandon Leis new Menno Singers' artistic director

• **BRANDON LEIS** begins as the new artistic director of Menno Singers beginning with the 2017-18 season. He comes with a strong choral background and has conducted the Rockway Mennonite Collegiate



Senior Choir and Concert Combo, and the Menno Youth Singers, as well as providing vocal instruction at Heritage College, Eastwood Collegiate Institute and other local Kitchener, Ont., music schools and conservatories. He is an active performer and has been a frequent tenor soloist with the Mennonite Mass Choir and Menno

Singers. Leis holds a master of arts degree in community music, an honours bachelor of music degree in vocal performance and an opera diploma from Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo. He currently serves as music director at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church and teaches voice and community music at Wilfrid Laurier. Leis follows Peter Nikiforuk in the position, who has resigned after 19 years with the choir. —Menno Singers

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# Before I go

*Departing pastor leaves youth with book outlining 'nine ideas you should know'*

BY AARON EPP  
Young Voices Editor  
WINNIPEG

Paul Loewen is wrapping up his time as youth pastor at Douglas Mennonite Church and he's given the youth he currently works with a unique gift. He wrote and self-published a book entitled *Before I Go: Nine Ideas You Should Know* and presented each youth group member with a personal copy last month.

The book is based on the nine devotionals Loewen presented to both the junior and senior high youth groups at the

The nine lessons that passed through the filter are entitled:

1. **GOD LOVES** you.
2. **THE BIBLE** is alive.
3. **HEAVEN STARTS** now.
4. **THE KISS** of justice and mercy.
5. **THE TRICYCLE** of faith.
6. **GOD IS** \_\_\_\_\_ (a chapter that addresses the problem of evil).
7. **GOD'S GAME** plan for you.

*[I want them to know] it's okay to have questions, it's okay to not know, it's okay to doubt, it's okay to be challenged by other people. Those are healthy parts of faith.'*  
(Paul Loewen)

Winnipeg church this past school year. It represents a "best of" the devotionals he has given since he started working at Douglas in 2008.

"These nine devos represent ideas I believe are foundational to a lifelong, vibrant, inquisitive and world-changing faith," the 30-year-old writes in the book's introduction. He initially had more than 25 ideas he wanted to communicate, but pared them down to nine, due to time constraints.

He tells *Canadian Mennonite* that when he was planning the devotional series and book, everything had to pass through a filter asking, "If the youth don't learn about this, am I okay with that?"

"If I answered that I'm okay with that, I scrapped the idea and moved on to the next one," he says.

8. **JESUS' THIRD** way.
9. **YOUR IDENTITY** is in Christ.

It's not the first book Loewen has written. He has self-published four novels and co-written the autobiography of his father, ultra-marathon cyclist and philanthropist Arvid Loewen. Writing *Before I Go* was different from those writing experiences, though.

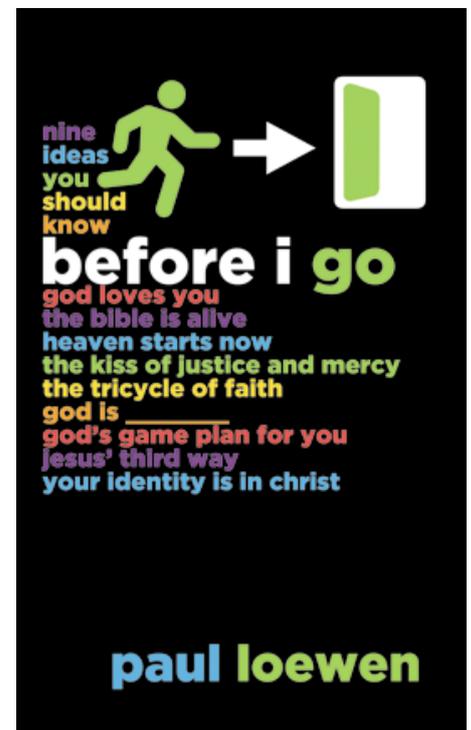
"This was some of the most fun writing I've ever done," he says, attributing that to the facts he had a clear structure in mind from the get-go and that he had a specific audience in mind: the roughly 40 young people who belong to the junior and senior youth groups at Douglas.

"The book is, in some ways, a letter to  
(Continued on page 28)

PHOTO COURTESY OF PAUL LOEWEN



*Over the past 10 years as youth pastor at Douglas Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, Paul Loewen, front right, has led 500 youth events, 25 retreats and 25 multi-day service trips, including this 2015 retreat for Grade 12 students.*



*'These nine devos represent ideas I believe are foundational to a lifelong, vibrant, inquisitive and world-changing faith,' Paul Loewen writes in his book Before I Go.*

PHOTO BY AARON EPP



*Paul Loewen has been the youth pastor at Douglas Mennonite Church in Winnipeg since 2008.*

*(Continued from page 27)*

the youth,” he says. “I feel like more people may benefit from this than just those 40 people [but I kept reminding myself] this is for the youth, and if other people are interested in it, that’s [a bonus]. It made the writing process that much more intimate and personal, and because of that I think it adds to the impact I intended the book to have.”

Loewen hopes that the book will help the youth transition from the black-and-white world of their early years to the grey areas they will encounter in adulthood. “[I want them to know] it’s okay to have questions, it’s okay to not know, it’s okay to doubt, it’s okay to be challenged by other people. Those are healthy parts of faith,” he says.

In the past couple of years, Loewen has started working towards a master of arts degree in theological studies from Regent College in Vancouver via distance education. The plan after he finishes his time at Douglas in mid-August is to move with his wife Jeanette and their three sons to

Vancouver for eight months so he can finish his coursework on campus. After that, he plans to return to Winnipeg and find another pastoral position.

It’s a plan he and Jeanette started talking about five years ago, and one that leaves him with mixed emotions as he finishes up at Douglas. He is passionate about his ministry and he loves the youth. At the same time, after 10 years, 500 youth events, 25 retreats and 25 multi-day service trips, it’s time to move on to something else.

Presenting the youth with the book last month was a moving experience. “It was powerful for me to be able to give them that gift and to also say I am really sad to leave,” Loewen says. “I’m not leaving with any ill feelings toward anyone or anything. . . . That is what I think really enabled me to share with passion my hopes and dreams for them.” ❧

*Additional copies of Before I Go are available online at [tinyurl.com/BIG9book](http://tinyurl.com/BIG9book).*



## Called to be a part of the church

*Community has been a constant throughout Carrie Lehn’s faith journey*

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CARRIE LEHN



*Carrie Lehn is the youth and young adult minister at Ottawa Mennonite Church.*

**BY AARON EPP**  
Young Voices Editor

**W**henever she tells her faith story, Carrie Lehn always mentions her paternal grandmother, who, she says, is a key example of gentleness and love. She always has other people on her radar, Lehn says, writing them letters or cards, bringing them dessert or giving them thoughtful gifts.

“She thinks about those little things that other people forget or don’t notice,” says Lehn, 28. “I want to be someone who is loving and finds a way to walk gently in this world the way she does.”

It’s a way of being that Lehn tries to live out today in the nation’s capital, where she serves as the youth and young adult



minister at Ottawa Mennonite Church. She began working there in 2013.

A big reason Lehn wanted to pursue a career in youth ministry is because being a part of the church was such an important part of her upbringing. “Church is just home for me in so many ways, and even when I have . . . challenged the church or struggled with God, I still felt a really strong calling to be part of the church,” she says.

Lehn was raised in Leamington, Ont., the youngest of three children born to Alfred, a General Motors employee, and

Janet, who worked at the local credit union. Her family attended North Leamington United Mennonite Church, where her grandparents also went.

“I’ve always considered myself raised by a village that is the church, so North Leamington was my village,” she says. “My parents served the church in many quiet ways throughout my life, as did my grandparents. They were good examples of putting actions into your faith, and being the hands and feet of Jesus.”

Formative experiences that helped Lehn grow in her faith included becoming really

enjoyed the work but felt called to pastor in a Mennonite setting. When the job at Ottawa Mennonite became available, she quickly applied.

Lehn loves her church family. She was excited when, this past March, the church approved a statement affirming LGBTQ persons in church membership, baptism, marriage, congregational leadership and pastoral ministry.

For Lehn, who is gay and came out to her congregation last year, it was especially meaningful. “I think we all have these moments where we wrestle with God, and I

*‘That was a huge time for me, testing a calling to ministry and being paired with other teenagers interested in the church.’  
(Carrie Lehn, of her !Explore experience)*

good friends in high school with a girl she describes as completely different from herself. This friend went through a lot of difficult experiences, and walking alongside her challenged Lehn’s simplistic view of God, as well as of good and bad.

“Through bad experiences, the church community came together to support her and take care of her, and I really saw that as something I wanted to be a part of the rest of my life—a church community that comes together and takes care of each other,” she says.

While she was in high school, Lehn participated in !Explore, the summer youth leadership development program at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind. “That was a huge time for me, testing a calling to ministry and being paired with other teenagers interested in the church,” she says.

After high school, she travelled to South Africa with the Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) Outtown discipleship school. She then enrolled at CMU, where she studied theology. Both experiences allowed her to learn more about God, the world and herself, as she forged friendships with other people of faith.

Upon graduating from CMU, Lehn found a job working with at-risk youth and then as the youth pastor at a Salvation Army church in downtown Winnipeg. She

think that’s a really good thing,” she says. “I think if faith were simple, it would be terrifying. Owning my own sexuality and coming out as gay as a pastor has been huge for me.”

Lehn draws strength from her favourite Bible verses, Isaiah 43:1-2: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.”

The water imagery in the verses especially resonates with Lehn, who enjoys a variety of watersports but ironically cannot swim. “There’s no promise of an easy, pain-free life, but God will be with you,” Lehn says. “Sometimes I have doubts . . . but I continue to believe and I continue to let my community carry me through those moments. I can’t swim, but I can strap on a lifejacket and I can carry on.”

She is thankful to be a part of Ottawa Mennonite. “I have this amazing youth group that is just the most sensitive, passionate, funky little group, and I really feel that they are bearing the image of God,” she says. “When the youth let you in, it’s such a gift to be there and walk with them.” ❧



*Carrie Lehn, centre, pictured with youth group members Cayle Beneteau, left, and Stuart Matthews, wanted to pursue a career in youth ministry because being a part of the church was such an important part of her upbringing.*



*‘When the youth let you in, it’s such a gift to be there and walk with them,’ says Carrie Lehn, second from left.*

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/// Calendar

**British Columbia**

- Sept. 15-16:** MCC B.C. Festival and Auction, at the Tradex in Abbotsford.
- Sept. 30:** MCC B.C. annual general meeting, at South Abbotsford Church, Abbotstord.
- Oct. 13-15:** Women's retreat, at Camp Squeah.

**Saskatchewan**

- Aug. 12:** Spruce River Folk Festival, at Spruce River Farm, 20 kilometres north of Prince Albert. Music and food in support of landless first nations in Saskatchewan.
- Sept. 15-16:** "Refresh, refocus, renew," a mini-retreat with Betty Pries. To learn more about this year-long prayer and visioning process, visit [mcsask.ca](http://mcsask.ca).

**Manitoba**

- Until Sept. 15:** "Colour distinctive: Art and Spirituality" exhibit by Angela Lilloco and Genevieve Henderson, upstairs at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg.
- Aug. 22:** Westgate Mennonite Collegiate's 13th-annual golf tournament, at Bridges Golf Course, Winnipeg.

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- open us to Your healing
- open us to Your future

**LORD**

- what are You calling us to embrace?
- what are You calling us to let go of?
- what are You calling us to live into?



**Sept. 9:** Fifteenth annual Head for the Hills fundraising ride for mental health. For more information registration or support for cyclists, visit edenhealthcare.ca.

## Ontario

**Until May 2019:** "Sites of Nonresistance: Ontario Mennonites and the First World War" exhibit of letters, photographs and documents from the Mennonite Archives of Ontario, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo.

**June 24:** The annual Nithview Community strawberry social, from 2 to 4 p.m., and 6:30 to 8 p.m., in New Hamburg.

**June 25:** Tavistock Mennonite Church 75th anniversary. Celebration service at 9:45 a.m., followed by a free barbecue chicken meal from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. for 400 ticket holders. To reserve a ticket, call the church office at 519-655-2581.

**June 30-July 2:** Annual camping weekend at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg. For more

information, call 519-625-8602.

**July 9:** Folk and gospel songs, led by Mike and Diana Erb, at the Detweiler Meeting House, Roseville, at 2:30 p.m.

**July 31-Aug. 4:** Peace Camp, a day camp held at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo. For more information, or to register, call Alison Keyes at 519-885-0220 ext. 24291.

**Aug. 20:** Riverdale Mennonite Church, Millbank, hosts its public closing service, at 10 a.m. Guest speakers include Glenn Zehr, Troy Watson and Jim Brown. A time of socializing and refreshments will take place after the service.

## U.S.A.

**Sept. 15-17:** The 18th Believers' Church Conference: "Word, Spirit and the renewal of the church: Believers' church, ecumenical and global perspectives"; at Goshen (Ind.) College. For more information, email John Roth at johndr@goshen.edu.

**To ensure timely publication of upcoming events, please send**

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*Jake Wiebe conducts a volunteer choir that performed music from previous Mennonite Church Alberta Sangerfests at this year’s Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta spring conference held at Bergthal Mennonite Church in Didsbury. Keynote speaker Wesley Berg’s talk was entitled ‘The Mennonite Sangerfest from Davlekanova to Didsbury’. Singing in choirs has declined in recent times for various reasons, he said, explaining that the meaning of choirs for Anabaptist Mennonites from Russia was derived from their strong sense of a communal faith.*

PHOTO BY JOHANNAH DEVRIES



*Marchers in Leamington, Ont., struggle to keep their candles lit on Feb. 1, during a*

*walk from St. John’s Anglican Church to the Leamington municipal building to pay their respects to the victims of the Quebec City mosque shooting on Jan. 29. The vigil, planned by the pastors of various churches, brought together between 70 and 80 Muslims and Christians, showing that people of all faiths need to support one another.*

CANADIAN MENNONITE PHOTO BY BARB DRAPER



*PHOTO ABOVE: Donald Frey, left, and Dean Weber prepare chicken legs to be barbecued and sold to hungry customers at the New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale, held on May 27. The chicken-leg project is run by the Markham-Waterloo Mennonite Conference, a group of rural congregations found mostly north of Elmira, Ont. Proceeds from the 2017 relief sale in New Hamburg topped \$330,000 and will be used by Mennonite Central Committee to assist people in need around the world. This is at least \$5,000 more than was raised in 2016.*

## God at Work in the World and Church Snapshots

MDS PHOTO COURTESY OF NICK HAMM



*PHOTO LEFT: Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) volunteers Chester Martin, left, David Martin and Colin Frey—all from Markham-Waterloo Mennonite Conference—finish off mucking out a flooded Minden, Ont., basement after removing all the wet furniture and belongings. Water more than a metre deep covered the basement, according to Nick Hamm, secretary of the MDS Ontario Unit executive.*