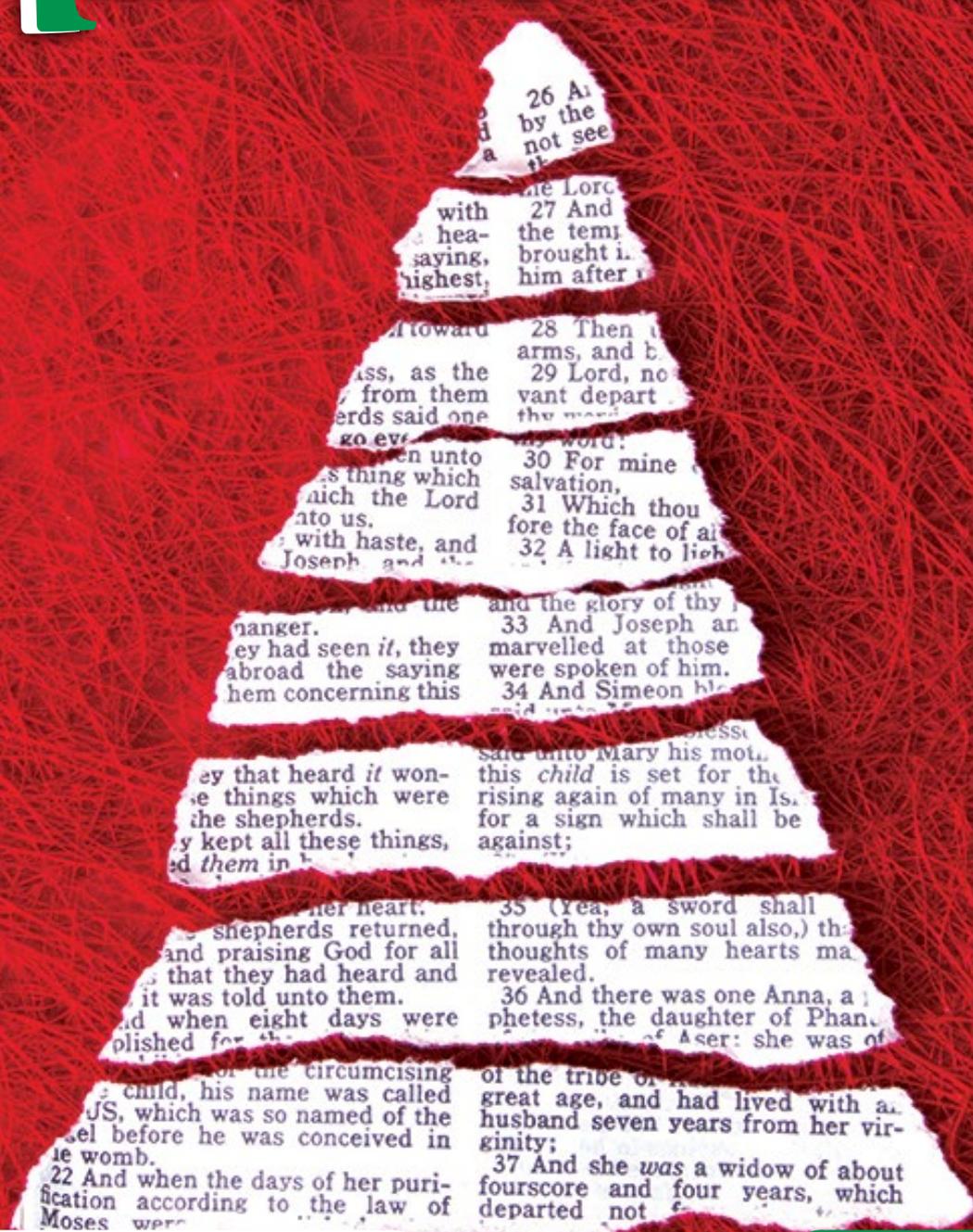


CANADIAN MENNONITE

December 11, 2017

Volume 21 Number 23



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inside 

God with us with God 4
Two friends, two faiths 18
'Our need for weed' 20

EDITORIAL

Significant tidings

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

What are the significant stories in this issue? When I asked this question in the office, the answer came back: “They’re all significant.” This, our Christmas issue, is chock-full of stories to pay attention to—with our prayers and actions.

Two international stories stand out—some good news and some heart-breaking news.

Our Anabaptist sisters and brothers in Ethiopia find their numbers growing, and with that growth comes the challenge of supporting the demands for leadership training and witness. They’re busy teaching discipleship and sharing the gospel in their land. They have a vision to do even more.

Senior writer Will Braun filed an update on our Anabaptist brothers and sisters in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who have a very different reality. Since August 2016, about 1.4 million people from the Kasai region have fled ethnic and political violence in their home area. An estimated 5,000 Mennonites are among those forced from their homes. Some have even been killed by local militias. Representatives from local Mennonite bodies are distributing aid and attempting to offer hope in a bleak situation. International Mennonite organizations are supporting emergency food distributions. Our donations and prayers are needed.

In the Young Voices section, writers Aaron Epp and Rachel Bergen remind us

that sexual abuse continues to fester in our world and in the church. As revelations are made, we are recognizing issues of power and privilege, and are forced to confront hard truths about ourselves and our society. What changes are required of us? Might the new year bring new habits and healthier relationships?



The ongoing letters about the Maple View insert show that we in the church are still figuring out

how to carry on constructive discussion around sexuality and gender identity. Here, too, issues of power and privilege play a part. We are invited to truly listen to each other. Can we pay attention to the pain our sisters and brothers experience? Can we forge new, respectful ways of being Christ’s body together, in spite of our differences?

While the dialogue around sexuality needs to continue and mature, the time has come to give space to other topics. Any letters about the Maple View insert received after Dec. 31 will not appear in print but will be posted online, in accordance with our letters policy (see page 7). We are considering what content to publish in the future that will lead to fruitful conversation on a topic that obviously matters greatly to some readers.

On a joyful note, our pages contain stories of Mennonites reaching out across cultures in their own communities. In spite of the hateful messages coming from certain quarters of North American

society, Mennonites are stepping beyond familiar territory to build trust and connections with their Muslim neighbours. This is surely important news.

As *Canadian Mennonite* staff and board, we commit ourselves to telling the stories of Mennonites in Canada and beyond. We do it to inform you, to inspire and to foster dialogue about the things of importance. We value you, our readers, as conversation partners on matters that matter.

Whether explicitly or not, our content points to the work of God in individuals, in the church and in the world. The hymn reminds us: “There’s not a place where we can flee but God is present there.” And, where God is present, joy also alights.

In these Advent and Christmas seasons, we celebrate the coming of Jesus, the Most Significant One. Feature writer Ryan Dueck reminds us: Christ’s coming was a “catastrophe of good”! I invite you to grasp hold of that joy and find your place in God’s reign of good. Pray with us that that divine peace will be spread over this troubled planet. Now that’s significant!

Holiday schedule

We are continuing our three-week holiday publication cycle. Our next issue will be dated Jan. 1, 2018. After that, we will return to our regular two-week publishing schedule.

ABOUT THE COVER:

In our Christmas feature, ‘God with us with God,’ Ryan Dueck, pastor of Lethbridge (Alta.) Mennonite Church, encourages us ‘to consider how God is inviting you into a deeper experience of his presence . . . even if in completely unexpected and unimaginable ways.’

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Guiding values:

Hebrews 10:23-25 • Accuracy, fairness, balance • Editorial freedom •

Seeking and speaking the truth in love • Open hearts and minds in discerning God's will

• Covenantal relationships and mutual accountability

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contents

DECEMBER 11, 2017 / VOL. 21, NO. X2



God with us with God 4

A simple question—"Are you ready for Christmas?"—posed by a check-out clerk last year led **RYAN DUECK** to ponder just what it means to be ready for the coming Messiah.

Recognizing potential in an uncertain future 12

In a meeting with MC Canada executive minister **WILLARD METZGER**, some Saskatchewan pastors and congregational leaders express unease as they learn about how the new nationwide church structure will unfold, reports regional correspondent **DONNA SCHULZ**.



Congo crisis grinds on 16

Senior writer **WILL BRAUN** updates the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, reporting that "[A]s many as 250,000 children could starve in Kasai in the next few months unless enough nutritious food reaches them quickly!

'Menno(comedy)nite' keeps audience in stitches 21

An advertised 'evening of hilarity' delivers plenty of jokes, humour and laughs to delight the gathered audience at a Mennonite Historical Society of B.C.-sponsored event in Abbotsford.

Young Voices 22-24

RACHEL BERGEN reflects on the feminist book club that saved her life in 'Finding shelter from the cold.' In light of recent exposés of men behaving badly, YV editor **AARON EPP** says 'The time is now' for men to do better, and offers some suggestions to make that happen.

Regular features:

For discussion **6** Readers write **7** Milestones **11**

A moment from yesterday **11** Schools Directory **28-29**

Calendar **30** Classifieds **31**

Significant tidings 2

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER

Moving forward 7

DOROTHY FONTAINE

No more of that old 'soft-sell' gospel 8

RYAN JANTZI



Award-winning member of the Canadian Church Press



CHRISTMAS FEATURE

God with us with God

BY RYAN DUECK

©ISTOCK.COM/MANUEL FABIA ORTEGA



“Are you ready for Christmas?” The question came from Ed, a cheerful clerk at Save-On-Foods, as I was picking up some milk. What kind of response was he seeking? Was he asking if I had finished all my Christmas shopping? If so, the answer would be, yes, mostly, meager though my efforts are.

Or perhaps he was asking if I was “ready” for the crush of family and friends and parties and social obligations that the season often contains. Again, my response would fall into the rather muted “yes” category.

Maybe Ed was asking me a theological question. This seemed the least likely option of all. I doubt that he was pondering deep existential mysteries as he mechanically ran my milk and bananas across the scanner.

But what if Ed was wondering if I am “ready” for the coming of Christ into our world and all that this signifies? Could his question have been about the character of my longing, the shape of my hope?

Am I ready for the Christ child who came to initiate the great reversal of history—the lowly being lifted up, the proud being brought down?

Am I ready for peace on earth and goodwill to all? Am I ready for no more war, no more crazed school shootings, no more refugee crises that steal and destroy human life?

Am I ready for no more corrupt politicians and unjust economic policies, no more divisions based on things that should never divide human beings?

Am I ready for *shalom*: for swords being beaten into plowshares; for all people, from the greatest to the smallest, having God’s law written on their hearts?

Am I ready for a new heaven and a new earth, for the one who is making all things new to come again in glory? Am I ready for the hopes and fears of all the years to be met, once and for all?

O yes. I’m ready.

As it turned out, Ed was mostly interested in whether or not I had finished Christmas shopping. I forked over \$10.28, wished Ed a Merry Christmas, and as I trudged

*So I end with the question Ed asked me:
‘Are you ready for Christmas?’*

'THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT,' AN ICON FROM THE LATE 15TH CENTURY, CURRENTLY HOUSED IN THE BENAKI MUSEUM, ATHENS, GREECE



'God with us' was good news, certainly, but 'with' also meant a young couple running for their lives as refugees not long after this baby boy of promise was born.

out into the frozen parking lot I began to rethink my answer. Am I really as ready for the hope of Christmas as I think I am? The more I thought about it, the more I thought that, in addition to my eager "yes," I must also answer "no."

No, I'm not ready for Christmas. I'm not ready for the coming of Jesus that exposes and judges and purifies and refines.

My heart is not prepared for this child who unsettles and upends and divides. I still cling too tightly to cherished sins, to preferred means of deriving identity and value through things that are passing away.

Too often I am not an instrument of peace. Too often I domesticate Christ and his coming, treating it as little more than a pleasant holiday with lights and cheer and cookies and parties, rather than the beginning of the end of the world as we know it, the beginning of God's revolutionary project of healing, judging, forgiving, reclaiming and renewing

the world. No, at the deepest level, I am probably not ready for Christmas. Not as ready as I should be.

The 'overturning' God

"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him 'Emmanuel,' which means, 'God is with us'" (Matthew 1:23).

The incarnation—God taking on human flesh in Jesus—is, and has been, a source of enormous comfort and consolation to Christians for the past two thousand years.

A God who would enter into our experience, who would take on our flesh, who would understand what it means to be human on a deep and personal level—this is good news.

But the incarnation is about more than a divine humanity-affirming hug.

I like how Skye Jethani puts it in his appropriately titled book, *With*: "[God's] plan to restore his creation was not to

send a list of rules and rituals to follow . . . nor was it the implementation of useful principles. . . . He did not send a genie to grant us our desires . . . nor did he give us a task to accomplish. . . . Instead, God himself came to be with us—to walk with us once again as he had done in Eden in the beginning. Jesus entered into our dark existence to share our broken world and to illuminate a different way forward. His coming was a sudden and glorious catastrophe of good."

What a phrase: "glorious catastrophe of good." We usually think of a catastrophe as something terrible, like an earthquake or an accident, or some sudden and dramatic tragedy.

But the origins of the Greek word simply mean "overturning."

When God comes to be with us, things don't always look like we imagine they ought to. But there are some things that need to be overturned, some patterns that have to be changed.

“God with us” is all about leading to “us with God.” And this doesn’t always happen how we think it should.

We see this in the lives of Mary and Joseph. At this time of year, we often gaze at idyllic manger scenes with peaceful Mary and the baby Jesus that conjure up emotions of hope and promise and contentment. “God with us” was good news, certainly, but “with” also meant a young couple running for their lives as refugees not long after this baby boy of promise was born. And as Simeon predicted, for Mary, “with” meant that a sword would pierce her soul; the baby boy who was Emmanuel would one day make her weep as he hung on a Roman cross.

And for Joseph, God “with” us would look like a parental relationship that began in scandal, an adopted baby boy who would probably always be a bit of an enigma to him.

I can only imagine what Mary and Joseph thought as Jesus said: “*Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?*” And pointing to his disciples, he said, “*Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother*” (Matthew 12:47-50).

And, of course, Mary and Joseph’s people—the people of Israel—would have preferred “God with us” to look a little more victorious and triumphant than the way Jesus’ story ultimately unfolded. Nobody imagined that “with” would involve a cruel and humiliating execution. Or a glorious and death-defeating resurrection! God with us really would be destined for the rising and falling of many in Israel, as Simeon predicted.

For these reasons and countless others, the son that Mary and Joseph were to name “Emmanuel” would indeed be the fulfillment of the hopes and fears of all the years, but not in the way they or anyone else expected.

As we prepare to head out into the Christmas season, I want to encourage us to reconsider what “with” looks like. Does “with” mean comfort? Rebuke? Guidance? Deliverance? Encouragement? Hope? Abiding joy and depth of purpose? Might “with” look like a hard road ahead, one that will test you and force you to

grow and change and re-examine priorities? Is it possible that “with” will look like shared suffering?

I want you to think about the ways that God has been and is with you now.

I want to encourage you to think about the ways in which God has been saying to you what he said to both Mary and Joseph in dreams and visions: “*Do not be afraid.*”

I want you to consider how God is inviting you into a deeper experience of his presence, and shaping you according to his character and purposes in the world, even if in completely unexpected and unimaginable ways.

After all, this is how God works in the world, and why God works in the world.

If there’s one thing that Christmas reveals to us, it’s that God’s coming cannot be managed or that it’s not what many of us would have predicted, but that God is always with us in the manner most appropriate to our need.

The question the coming of Christmas invites us into is: “Will we be ‘with’ the God who comes to be ‘with’ us?”

God doesn’t wave a wand at Christmas and magically bring about lions and lambs and all the other magnificent

visions of the prophets. God works slowly, patiently, long-sufferingly, collaboratively. He enters our experience and involves us in the process, inviting us to be with him and he with us.

And to be with God means to become like God, which takes time. The character of Christ is not formed in us overnight. It takes a lot of God with us with God.

So I end with the question Ed asked me: “Are you ready for Christmas?”

We answer, as always, with our lives. We declare our readiness for “God with us” by our willingness to be “with God,” to allow our lives to be overturned and upended by Christmas’s “glorious catastrophe of good.” ❧

Ryan Dueck is pastor of Lethbridge (Alta.) Mennonite Church. Adapted from a sermon he preached there on Dec. 18, 2016.



/// For discussion

1. How do you respond when you are asked if you are ready for Christmas? Do you enjoy the flurry of activities and decorations connected with the Christmas season or do you wish for a simpler way to celebrate “God with us”? What does it mean to be “ready for Christmas”?
2. Ryan Dueck writes, “When God comes to be with us, things don’t always look like we imagine they ought to.” How was this true in Jesus’ day? How is it true today?
3. “As we prepare to head out into the Christmas season, I want to encourage us to reconsider what ‘with’ looks like,” Dueck writes. What does “God with us” mean for you? Do you expect it to bring guidance and comfort, rebuke or even suffering? Have you experienced God working “slowly, patiently, long-sufferingly, collaboratively”?
4. How has God been with you in the past, and how is he with you now? Have you ever experienced a catastrophe that turned into something good? Have you heard God say, “Do not be afraid”?

—BY BARB DRAPER

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VIEWPOINTS

/// Readers write

We welcome your comments and publish most letters from subscribers. Letters, to be kept to 300 words or less, are the opinion of the writer only and are not to be taken as endorsed by this magazine or the church. Please address issues rather than individuals; personal attacks will not appear in print or online. All letters are edited for length, style and adherence to editorial guidelines. Send them to letters@canadianmennonite.org and include the author's contact information and mailing address. Preference is given to letters from MC Canada congregants.

✉ More responses to Maple View's paid supplement on sexuality

RE: HONOUR GOD with Your Bodies" insert, Sept. 25.

As an advocate for respect, diversity and equality, I am deeply disturbed that you would publish this. I hope you are aware that this looks like you support the view that sexual orientation is a choice, and that people who are LGBTQ are broken, sinners and damaged.

It makes me cry to think that a gay person might read this view of religious intolerance. Maple View is certainly right that LGBTQ people are struggling, but it's because of articles and attitudes like this, not because they are gay. Our LGBTQ youth are committing suicide because of this intolerance, specifically

(Continued on page 8)

FROM OUR LEADERS

Moving forward

DOROTHY FONTAINE

“You can't really talk about mission without talking about the End.”

This was a conclusion that a colleague and I came to after reflecting on Bible verses that hold these two images together. From expansive, cosmic hymns (Colossians 1:15-20 and Ephesians 1:3-14), the joyful anticipation of creation's new birth (Romans 8:18-25), and the foretelling of unfettered communion with our Creator and the healing of all nations (Revelation 22:2), Scripture celebrates and eagerly anticipates God's mission to restore and reconcile all things.

If we use these passages as a gauge to measure the missional work of the church, we will indeed find many stories to celebrate, just as we will find stories that have missed their mark. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's assemblage of more than 6,000 testimonies from residential school survivors is but one example of mission that went terribly wrong. As we now work to disentangle mission from colonial sentiment and a



500-year-old undertaking to dispossess Indigenous peoples from their lands, families, and spiritual and cultural inheritance, we must ask ourselves how our notions of mission got so “tangled” in the first place.

I suspect that we will find many knots once we start pulling at the strings. For we've learned that when mission allies with the ever-expansive forces of na-

I suspect that we will find many knots once we start pulling at the strings.

tionalism, greed and fear, its so-called promises of “peace” inevitably come at a terrible cost: first to those it oppresses, but also to those who believe in its promises.

I've heard it said that the first casualty of war is truth. So here is our truth: Our faith is grounded in the commandment to love, even if we have to take up a cross to accomplish it. Knowing that Jesus alone is faithful to love, and also knowing that we have not only failed to love but are likely to fail again, how do we move forward?

Perhaps when we think about mission, particularly in light of our new emphasis on the mission of the regional church, we should take some time to consider the End and its underlying purpose. Is it to bring about the destruction of all things or the restoration of all things? If we believe in the latter, then our mission must embrace love over fear; and righteousness, justice and compassion over intolerance and hatred. We must also seek the forgiveness of others and pursue paths to reconciliation while trusting in God's grace and mission for peace.

As we anticipate Christ's coming this Advent, let's reflect on the Apostle Paul's words: “I don't think there is any com-

parison between the present hard times and coming good times. The created world itself can hardly wait for what's coming next. Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead. Meanwhile, the joyful anticipation deepens . . .” (Romans 8:18-21, The Message Bible).

Dorothy Fontaine is the director of mission for Mennonite Church Manitoba.

(Continued from page 7)

religious intolerance. I don't see how a church with these views can say they are "walking together in love" with LGBTQ persons." Is that what *Canadian Mennonite* is saying as well?

I understand that we need to be tolerant of the opinions of others, but when they are damaging to a group of people, do we need to make those opinions

so public? Could these thoughts not have stayed at Maple View Mennonite Church?

I want to tell everyone across Canada that God intended gay people to be gay, to marry just like anyone else; that for them marriage is also a "good creation of God"; that people who are gay also feel that marriage is a sacred institution to them as well.

PEARL BARZ, STEINBACH, MAN.

KINGDOM YEARNINGS

No more of that old 'soft-sell' gospel

RYAN JANTZI

"All you gotta do is . . ." How often have we in the church uttered these words? We petition new committee prospects with this blasé plea. We invite people to faith in Christ saying, "All you gotta do is ask Jesus into your heart."

These are the words of the "soft-sell." They are words that invite others to a bare minimum in order to appeal to as many as possible. It's ironic that we who follow the one who was obedient even to death, regularly declare the words "All you gotta do is . . ." According to church tradition, all but one of Jesus' disciples were martyred for their faith. And yet, as their spiritual descendants, we continue with the "soft-sell."

In John 6, Jesus watches many of his disciples turn and walk away. This followed a day of particularly difficult teaching. They decided that this rabbi and his radical teaching wasn't for them. Apparently, they felt they weren't up to the task. And so they walked away.

If following one of my sermons I were to watch many of my congregants walk away, never to return, I would be rather concerned. I'm sure my mind and heart would flood with visions of slashed

church budgets and empty volunteer slates. I confess that I would fear my meagre response to that regular question directed toward pastors: "So, how big is your church?"

However, Jesus' response is quite different. He doesn't chase after them. He doesn't make passionate re-explanations of what he was really trying to say. Instead, he extends the opportunity for more to leave! Jesus turns to the Twelve—the core of his followers—and calmly asks, "You don't want to leave too, do you?" (All Bible verses quoted are from the New International Version, 2011).

We live in the age of the "soft-sell." We are pleased if a family gathers for worship with fellow believers even twice a month.



Maybe, rather than begging and appeasing, we need to turn and say, 'You don't want to leave too, do you?'

Our discipleship programs for children are heavy on games and crafts, and light on Scripture. Our prayers are short and our sermons are pacifying. Mission engagement is squeezed into the few available cracks in our hectic schedules. We speak abundantly of mercy and rarely of obedience.

Perhaps this is because we feel we need

to keep as many in the pews as possible. This is why we've continued to lower the bar. But we've wilted. We find ourselves impotent. Any difference between us and our agnostic neighbours appears negligible.

Jesus has so much more in store! It may mean lower numbers and fewer resources in the meantime. But that didn't seem to concern Jesus too much; he would rather have a small, committed core oriented around the radical call to discipleship than a half-hearted crowd. We need to boldly proclaim the call of Jesus once again: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." Maybe, rather than begging and appeasing, we need to turn and say, "You don't want to leave too, do you?"

May the Holy Spirit shift our call to discipleship from "All you gotta do is . . ." to the invigorating "Take up your cross . . ."

Ryan Jantzi pastors Kingsfield-Zurich Mennonite Church, Ont., where he's fascinated with exploring the interplay between traditional church and new expressions of mission.

WE WERE PLEASED to find the well-documented and prayerfully developed insert by Maple View Mennonite Church in the Sept. 25 issue of *Canadian Mennonite*. The timing of this issue coincided with our congregation's periodic update of the subscription list to *CM*. Our response: When *CM* is willing to publish an insert of this nature and calibre, we certainly want to remain on your list.

We were stunned and deeply disturbed by the tone and content in the letters of response in the Oct. 23 issue. Is there no willingness on the part of the LGBTQ people to make room for any other interpretation of this issue? Does the Holy Spirit speak only to the people on one side of this issue?

What most of us non-LGBTQ people want is the same tolerance, acceptance and respect for our convictions that LGBTQ people request, expect and demand for their convictions. Is that request so out of line?

Wouldn't it help if Mennonite Church Canada, in its "General Board confession to the LGBCTQ community" (Oct. 9, page 9), would openly admit and include a reference to the hurts of the non-LGBTQ people as well as the hurts of the LGBTQ people?

Wouldn't it help if we would be more influenced by how the Holy Spirit guides us to respond rather than by who gets hurt, and then gauge our responses to achieve human standards of satisfaction?

These are some questions that we have and would suggest others to consider prayerfully.

**ARMIN AND CAROLINE ENS,
REINLAND, MAN.**

FIRST OF ALL, I have family members and friends from denominations other than Mennonite who share the perspectives in the paid insert from Maple View Mennonite Church. Over the years I have learned to wear my football helmet to gatherings to protect myself from constantly being beaten on the head with those verses and that specific interpretation of them, so, unconsciously, I found myself reaching for that protective gear once I read page 1 of the insert.

Second, I have been open to other possible interpretations for decades.

Finally, my biggest issue with Maple View, the insert and its content is that they were not honest and open with me. Hidden on page 4 in italic is the acknowledgement, "This statement has been adapted from the Spiritual Heritage Committee of the EFCA."

Since Maple View's views are most closely aligned with the views and interpretations of the Spiritual Heritage Committee of the Evangelical Free Church of America, will it stop wavering between two interpretations and declare itself either in accordance with a spiritual heritage statement from Mennonite Church Canada's Covenant New document, or openly declare

full affiliation with the EFCA?

DAVID RINGER, TORONTO

The author attends Toronto United Mennonite Church.

I AM NOT sure how I missed this paid supplement, but reading the responses in the Oct. 23 issue piqued my curiosity.

I must admit, I was shocked and not shocked. I understand there are still people who interpret the Bible literally. However, I was surprised that *Canadian Mennonite* chose to include material so judgmental and that flies in the face of known research and data that support the now generally accepted fact that sexual relations outside of what fundamental religions consider acceptable are, in fact, normal.

If *CM* needs the money that much, I would be willing to make a donation to keep this type of "information" out of the publication. If the reference statement on human sexuality truly fits the requirements of "educating, informing and inspiring," then I would suggest publishing it without payment, just like this letter, if you choose to include it in *CM*.

CHARLIE SMITH, ALLAN, SASK.

A WRITER IMPLIED in *Canadian Mennonite* that atheism has more to offer than Christianity and said he hoped his children would be atheists ("Father hopes his boys don't discover faith," March 31, 2014). In another writer's opinion, the Bible was at par with Harry Potter; both had some value, but neither one could perform miracles ("Millennials shape their own church," April 28, 2014).

At the time, I hoped that *CM* would respond with comments suggesting that Christ has much more to offer than atheism, and that the Bible is infinitely more worthy of our study than Harry Potter.

But when Maple View Mennonite Church spent time as a congregation prayerfully searching Scripture during the Being a Faithful Church process and came up with its response, "Honour God with Your Bodies" in the Sept. 25 issue, it was met with letters of opposition. *CM* even felt it necessary to distance itself in an apologetic response on page 12 of the Oct. 23 issue: "We regret the harm this insert has caused. We want you to know that the decision to accept this insert was not taken lightly . . ."

Whether we agree with Maple View is not the issue, but I'm wondering if God views Mennonite Christians and *CM* as hypocritical and lacking integrity for their responses in one case and lack of them in the others.

PETER WIEBE, SASKATOON

WHEN I READ Melissa Miller's "Holy sexuality" column (June 19, page 10), I pondered the title for a

long time. I concluded that we need to go back to the creation to get the truest definition. What God created was “very good,” according to Genesis 1:31.

Maple View Mennonite Church’s “Reference statement on human sexuality” (Sept. 25 paid supplement) gives a Bible-based definition of “holy sexuality.” When humans chose to sin, perfection in relationship was spoiled, bringing distortions and perversions in many varieties.

God provided restoration of a relationship with him through Jesus’ death and resurrection—a “new birth” to all who will accept it. The gift of the Holy Spirit, given to all who are born again, enables people to overcome, rather than yield to, temptation, be it envy, malice, greed, gossip or sexual relations, as stated in Romans 1:29; Ephesians 5:3 and Colossians 3:5.

The Maple View statement acknowledges the struggles of LGBTQ people, as well as how the church relates to them redemptively—a work in progress.

Some debunk the philosophy of “love the sinner, hate the sin.” I’m not a Bible scholar, but it seems to me that the narrative of the Bible after the Fall is of God doing exactly that.

Thank you to *Canadian Mennonite* for giving all in the church a voice.

ROSELLA EBY, DRAKE, SASK.

IN 1985, I was ordained with the General Conference Mennonite Church. It was a difficult day for me, considering my past. But the Mennonite church was very encouraging and supportive. Not having a Christian background meant that I learned many things from gracious people as I went through life and ministry among the Mennonites.

I have served in various Mennonite churches and conferences over these past 40-plus years. I have seen many changes. Not all I have agreed with, but I have seen how we treated each other with grace in the face of disagreement.

I am saddened how the study material by Maple View Mennonite Church, which has a long history of 158 years of being a Mennonite witness, has brought about such deep rejection of that church’s position on biblical sexuality that agrees with our *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. The Mennonite church that had so wonderfully accepted me, and encouraged me, is showing itself not to be accepting or encouraging of those who take a position against the current stream of popular opinion that disagrees with our *Confession of Faith*.

It seems to me that we, as Mennonites, have a responsibility to “agree to disagree, agreeably.” Is this not the essence of what God says in Romans 12:18: “*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone*”?

While I agree with our *Confession of Faith* and the Maple View material, I also believe everyone has the right to choose how to live without being harassed or abused, regardless of what is believed. This is not only being Mennonite, as I understand it, but being a biblical Christian, which is the only base for how we should relate to each other.

TOM WARNER, PORT ROWAN, ONT.

The author is pastor of Erie View United Mennonite Church in Port Rowan.

HAVING WATCHED THE struggle going on in the Mennonite denomination in which I grew up, and was baptized and married in, I am concerned that no positive response to Maple View’s paid supplement was received, or at least included, in the Oct. 23 issue. I do sincerely appreciate the response by the publisher, though, which was well done.

Many have spoken and written in the same tone expressed in the supplement, and I am grateful for those who support this view. There is no intent to speak disrespectfully of what now has come to be called the LGBTQ community, but to return to the reading of Scripture that has been central to our beliefs.

This is a very divisive matter, and as we see the denomination disintegrate, it will become evident that, had we stuck to the position expressed in the supplement, we might have lost some folk, but likely not entire churches.

JOHN NEUFELD, BURLINGTON, ONT.

I was surprised and saddened to read the responses to the supplement that Maple View Mennonite Church placed in *Canadian Mennonite*. We may not agree with what they wrote, but why are we stomping all over them because they choose to believe differently? Is dialogue not about two parties having conversation? It doesn’t mean we have to agree.

For those who are choosing to cancel their subscriptions to *CM* because of this supplement, I ask why? This is one topic.

And as far as *CM* apologizing for publishing the supplement, I say there is no need. There are two sides to every story and there is no reason a different view cannot be expressed. Whether we feel the same or not, Maple View has the right to express its concerns.

It is not the LGBTQ topic that worries me the most, it is the tone of voice that is used when discussing it. This goes for both those for and against this lifestyle. If both sides have prayed and discerned with God on this topic, then can we not listen and discuss it without pointing and shaking our fingers. It’s time for indoor voices; God is listening.

RUTH BAHR, TAVISTOCK, ONT.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Friesen—Thea (b. Sept. 5, 2017), to Wolfgang and Steffi Friesen, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Gammon—Isla Claire (b. Oct. 11, 2017), to Jessica (Tomlinson) and Braden Gammon, Hamilton Mennonite, Ont.

Good—Jackson James (b. Oct. 20, 2017), to Daryl and Amy Good, Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

Klassen—Kaidan Wilham Harlos (b. Oct. 20, 2017), to Brock and Gillian Harlos Klassen, Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Baptisms

Chris Carther-Krone, Tiffany Carther-Krone, Matthew Peters—Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg, Nov. 5, 2017.

Anson Ehgoetz—Shantz Mennonite, Baden, Ont., Sept. 17, 2017.

Alexandra Lebold, Makayla Roth, Brianna Wagler,

Tyson Wagler—Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont., Oct. 22, 2017.

Marriages

Bender/Winter—Chad Bender (Hillcrest Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.) and Rebekah Winter (Shantz Mennonite, Baden, Ont.), at St. Agatha, Ont., Aug. 5, 2017

Klassen/Stoesz—Nathan Klassen (Altona Mennonite, Man.) and Erika Stoesz, in Altona, Sept. 1, 2017.

Deaths

Driedger—Louise, 63 (b. Feb. 12, 1954; d. Oct. 28, 2017), Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont.

Dyck—Gerald H., 91 (b. Dec. 12, 1925; d. Sept. 22, 2017), Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

Eby—Melvin, 86 (b. Nov. 26, 1930; d. Oct. 31, 2017), Floradale Mennonite, Ont.

Fehr—Mary (nee Rempel), 85 (b. Sept. 9, 1932; d. Oct. 25, 2017), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Janzen—George, 90 (b. June 9, 1927; d. Oct. 18, 2017), Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Janzen—Peter, 79 (d. Nov. 1, 2017), Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Janzen—Tina (Ekatrina), 94 (b. Aug. 23, 1923; d. Oct. 25, 2017) Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Kasper—Helen (nee Esau), 85 (b. Feb. 8, 1932; d. Nov. 4, 2017), Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

Kroeker—Irene (nee Fast), 90 (b. Feb. 13, 1927; d. Nov. 2, 2017), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Leis—Marie, 96 (b. Jan. 1, 1921; d. Oct. 16, 2017), Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.

Lichti—Lincoln, 89 (b. July 15, 1928; d. Oct. 26, 2017), Tavistock Mennonite, Ont.

Penner—Kaetie Helen, 86 (d. Oct. 29, 2017), Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Reimer—Jacob, 92 (b. June 13, 1925; d. Oct. 17, 2017), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Warkentin—John M., 99 (b. April 14, 1918; d. Oct. 20, 2017), Nordheim Mennonite, Winnipegosis, Man.

Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones

announcements within four months of the event.

Please send Milestones announcements by email to milestones@canadianmennonite.org, including the congregation name and location. When sending death notices, please also include birth date and last name at birth if available.

A moment from yesterday



When Abraham Dick broke his back in 1938, the family struggled to keep up with the work on their farm near St. Agatha, Ont. Then one day in early November, they were surprised to hear the roar of tractors. Many neighbours had shown up unannounced to do the fall plowing. This picture of the event was cherished by the family for many years, and passed down to Abraham and Agatha Dick's daughter, Sarah Dyck, who donated it to the Mennonite Archives of Ontario in 2017. Does your family also treasure stories of unexpected kindness?

Text: Laureen Harder-Gissing

Photo: Sarah Dyck / Mennonite Archives of Ontario



archives.mhsc.ca

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

SPECIAL ASSEMBLY 2017 FOLLOW-UP

Recognizing potential in an uncertain future

MC Saskatchewan congregational leaders ponder the impact of new church structure

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
OSLER, SASK.

Potential. That word kept surfacing at Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's fall leadership assembly, as pastors and congregational leaders met with MC Canada's executive minister, Willard Metzger, to learn about their regional church's role in the newly covenanted nationwide body.

At the Nov. 25 gathering, held at Osler Mennonite Church, congregational leaders learned that MC Canada's new organizational structure, made up of the five regional churches (formerly area churches), has the potential for greater involvement than in the past. These regional churches, said Metzger, will work together to determine the nationwide agenda and to fund that agenda. A nationwide communications team, made up of representatives from each regional church body, will keep avenues of communication open between congregations, the regional church and the nationwide church.

MC Canada's international Witness program will shift toward relational funding of Witness workers. This, said Metzger, has the potential to enliven Witness work. Partner organizations such as Mennonite World Conference will approach MC Canada with a request for workers. That request will then "go through our grid to make sure it is compatible with what we do," said Metzger. From there, it will go to the regional churches, and from there to congregations, who will be asked to prayerfully consider whether God is calling them to support this work. Once a "confirmation of call" is received from congregations, Witness workers will be placed.

"We are already doing relational funding through mission partnerships," said Metzger. In future, regional church staff will help workers develop relational funding relationships with congregations. Funding for Witness workers is expected to be 50 percent relational and 50 percent core

funding, the latter of which comes from the general Witness budget.

Eric Olfert of Mount Royal Mennonite confessed to feeling confused by this funding plan. Witness workers George and Tobia Veith will be itinerating in Saskatchewan this winter. Olfert wanted to know, "Do we ask people to give to Witness or to the Veiths?" Olfert suggested that the funding plan "seems to have the potential to become complicated."

Ryan Siemens, a regional church minister for MC Saskatchewan, explained that if more funds are designated for a Witness worker than that worker requires, it would be possible to reallocate those funds to the needs of other workers.

Siemens also noted that some new Canadian congregations have expressed interest in returning to their home countries to plant Anabaptist churches or peace centres. While this type of work hasn't traditionally been funded through Witness, it might be possible under the new structure, he said.

MC Canada's new structure is brimming with potential, it seems, but Metzger cautioned his audience: "We don't know what the church is going to look like. It's like peering into a thick, dense fog. We are living in a sustained time of uncertainty, ambiguity and mystery. It would be foolish for us to pretend that we know."

Not everyone is comfortable with uncertainty. "A group left our church citing a desire for orthodoxy," said George Epp of Eigenheim Mennonite. "It's almost as if change is too much for some people."

Metzger agreed that change can make people feel uneasy but noted, "We're moving into a time where more people are valuing disagreement, a time where unity is defined by how we treat each other, in the love of Christ, when we're in disagreement."

Metzger also noted that the changes MC Canada is undergoing are not unique, but are happening "all across Christian expression." Citing American author Phyllis Tickle, Metzger said that the church is experiencing a shift away from the Bible as authority, to community discernment. Anabaptist Christians, said Metzger, are perfectly positioned to help people who are wrestling with what they believe. ☸



Mennonite Church Canada executive minister Willard Metzger, standing left, explains changes to the structure of the new nationwide church to congregational leaders gathered for MC Saskatchewan's fall leadership assembly. Standing beside Metzger is Ryan Siemens, MC Saskatchewan's area church minister of congregational and pastoral relations.

Ethiopian Meserete Kristos Church continues to grow

BY BARB DRAPER

Editorial Assistant

While visiting Ethiopia recently, Darrell Jantzi and John Peters heard that Meserete Kristos Church (MKC) has continued to grow and now numbers 310,877 baptized members, an increase of 4.5 percent over last year.

Jantzi and Peters, both from Ontario's Waterloo Region and members of an MKC Link Canada team that connects Mennonite Church Canada and Meserete Kristos College, were invited by the general secretary of MKC to attend the church's annual general meeting in August.

An important part of the visit was reviewing the relationship between MC Canada and the College, as well as learning about the church, which has 1,011 local congregations across 38 regions of Ethiopia. Local churches relate to each other and to the broader church through a council of 180 elders. About 60 percent of the congregations worship in rented space or in temporary shelters made of poles and tarps. They are being pressured by the government to erect permanent buildings or risk losing their land.

The College hopes to continue developing its program and has a strong desire to partner with a Mennonite seminary in North America to offer a master's degree in theology. The vision for becoming a full liberal arts college has experienced government obstacles and has not yet been realized.

The College is highly respected and has graduated more than a thousand students. The theology program has been expanding, with a main campus at Debre Zeit, where boarding students in the degree program are taught in English, and an extension campus in the city of Nazareth, where degree and diploma students use the Amharic language. A second extension campus opened recently in Addis Ababa for part-time students. Facilities at the original campus are being stretched, and the kitchen and dining room are no

longer adequate now that the women's dorm is nearing completion. College administrators anticipated that there would be a 20 percent increase in registration for the fall, expanding the need for scholarship assistance.

MKC leaders expressed their gratitude to the Canadian church for its prayers and support. Tuition, room and board cost each student more than C\$2,500 per year. The Link team hopes to raise \$250,000 in Canada for the nearly depleted scholarship fund. As the official MC Canada liaison, Jantzi was given the opportunity to review the College's financial report from last year and the proposed budget for the coming year.

Jantzi and Peters also had the opportunity to visit an underground church where believers meet in secret prayer cells. In some areas, the ultra-conservative Ethiopian Orthodox Church makes it dangerous to openly profess faith, so that many hungry hearts seek Jesus at night, for fear of family rejection and alienation in the community. Over time, new believers gain confidence and prepare for baptism, then celebrate their faith and hope in Jesus

Christ more openly.

Visiting another MKC outreach program in a predominantly Muslim region enabled the Canadians to observe how believers with a clear sense of call extend their Christian witness in an area where they were not really welcome. For years, believers took a prayerful and humble approach, assisting in the needs of the local community in the spirit of Jesus. This opened the door for discussion and the opportunity to debate with local leaders who were well-versed in the Qur'an. Communicating Jesus through what the Qur'an teaches was an effective way to bring healthy dialogue, and there is growing receptivity and desire to experience more of Jesus.

A third memorable encounter with an effective witness for Christ was in an inner city. Here, Jantzi and Peters observed MKC people on their knees on a Monday morning, praying and fasting for homeless children and youth. A leader in the church said he had a horrible home life and had run away at 13 to find a better life on the streets. Attracted by the singing and joy-filled words of invitation by Christian young people, he was welcomed, led to Jesus and became part of a caring community.

"In an age that casts doubt on just about everything spiritual, it is heartening to see and experience the concrete indisputable power of God manifest in a solid, rapidly growing community of believers," said Jantzi about the visit. ☿

PHOTO COURTESY OF DARRELL JANTZI



Members of the MKC Link Canada team met with leaders of Meserete Kristos College during a visit to Ethiopia in August. Pictured from left to right: Yigezu Testaye, John Peters, Darrell Jantzi and Kiros Tekla.

Putting goals into practice

Equipping Day workshops offer insights on spirituality, Anabaptism and service

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent

SASKATOON

Setting goals is a good practice, but how does a faith community translate those goals into reality?

At their Refresh, Refocus, Renew mini-retreat in September, members of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan identified three goals for the coming years. Although the reference group appointed to work with these goals will unveil a plan for their implementation at the regional church's annual delegate sessions next March, Equipping Day planners found creative ways to put the three goals into practice already.

Held annually, Equipping Day offers workshops on a variety of topics and is open to everyone. Zoar Mennonite Church in Waldheim, Sask. hosted the Oct. 28 event.

In answer to the first goal of "developing a deeper spirituality," Claire Ewert Fisher presented a workshop entitled "Spirituality in work clothes." Using the "Circle of sensibility" adapted from Urban Holmes III's *A History of Christian Spirituality*, she helped participants identify their own type of spirituality.

While some believers are motivated by Bible study and theological writings, others

experience God most strongly through singing and extemporaneous prayer. Some understand God to be a mystery, and value retreat and silent prayer as expressions of faith. Still others seek a kind of embodied spirituality through service to others.

Ewert Fisher noted that each quadrant of the circle has strengths and dangers, and that all four quadrants are needed. The church "needs every aspect [of spirituality] to achieve balance," she said.

"If you want to grow in your faith, you

and live out Anabaptist theology." Rather than hearkening back to the pages of early Anabaptist history, Wallace challenged participants to identify heroes who embody Anabaptist values today.

She talked about Rosemary Freeny Harding, an African-American woman who identified with the Mennonite church and tried to live out the Anabaptist values of peace and nonresistance during the American civil rights movement of the 1960s.

While some believers are motivated by Bible study and theological writings, others experience God most strongly through singing and extemporaneous prayer.

should move in the opposite direction," she added. Someone who appreciates the intellectual aspects of faith, for example, may be uncomfortable with solitude and contemplation. But moving beyond one's own comfortable quadrant and into a new area may be the best way to grow spiritually.

Cindy Wallace's "Anabaptist heroes" workshop offered a response to the second Refresh, Refocus, Renew goal: "to embrace

She said that in reading or hearing about the lives of others, she asks herself, "Where do I get really curious or uncomfortable, and why?" Wallace learned from Freeny Harding's writings that there needn't be a distinction between spirituality and activism. Freeny Harding, said Wallace, "practised activism in being family."

Reading biographies and memoirs is one way to find heroes, Wallace said, but another is by listening to the stories people tell. People's stories have much to teach, she added, encouraging participants to "let the stories themselves open us up to some of our blind spots."

A third goal identified during September's mini-retreat was that of "service to the community and to the world." Two workshops spoke to this theme.

In "Don't be a culture monkey," former MC Canada Witness worker Todd Hanson offered participants tools with which to engage in cross-cultural communication.

He shared the story of a monkey sitting by a river that noticed a fish struggling against the current. Thinking the fish was trying to get out of the water, the monkey decided to help by grabbing the fish and



Claire Ewert Fisher indicates the four quadrants of the spirituality wheel in her workshop, 'Spirituality in work clothes.' All four quadrants are needed to achieve balance in the church, she says.



Abby Heinrichs and her father Steve tell their personal stories in a workshop entitled 'In your light, we see light: The church and Indigenous solidarity.'

tossing it on the shore. The monkey was happy when, after a while, the fish quit struggling and became calm.

A “culture monkey” reduces people groups to their essential identifying traits. This is called essentialism and should be avoided, said Hanson. Rather, he said, “Take what people say about their own culture as a personal observation, which should not be generalized to other people who come from the same background.”

Steve Heinrichs, director of Indigenous relations for MC Canada, together with his 11-year-old daughter, Abby, presented the day’s final workshop, which was for all participants. In their presentation, “In your light, we see light: The church and Indigenous solidarity,” the father and daughter told their personal stories—Abby as a biological daughter of the Sto:lo First Nation, and Steve as the son of Mennonites who settled on land that once belonged to the Sto:lo people.

Together they urged participants to join in solidarity with Indigenous peoples in lobbying federal MPs to support Bill C-262. The bill, which will come up for second reading in the House of Commons on Dec. 4, would help to ensure that Indigenous human rights are protected. “We can repair some of the injustice of the past,” said Steve. “I have hope in those who are willing to walk in the steps of a brown Jesus.” ☞

For more photos, visit canadianmennonite.org/equipping-day-2017.



☞ Staff changes

Pastoral transitions in Ontario

- **KIM REMPEL** began as youth worker at Floradale Mennonite Church on Sept. 1. She studied theology at Acadia Divinity College in Wolfville, N.S., where she served as pianist in the chapel, and is currently studying religious studies at the University of Waterloo, Ont. She has worked as the chapel assistant and student organist at Manning Memorial Chapel in Wolfville; as the organist and choir director at Pereaux United Baptist Church in Canning, N.S.; as a counsellor, Leaders In Training leader, and pastor at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg, Ont.; and as choir director, spiritual director and director at Ontario Mennonite Music Camp. 
- **CARMEN BRUBACHER** was licensed toward ordination as a chaplain at Forest Heights Long-term-care Home in Kitchener on Oct. 1 at Waterloo North Mennonite Church in Waterloo. After earning a BA at the University of Waterloo, she received her master of divinity degree at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Ind. Most recently, she worked as a writer for MennoMedia's “Shine” curriculum, as a supply minister at Ottawa Mennonite Church, as a short-term administrative assistant with Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, and as a long-term homemaker. 
- **JIM BROWN** was invited to move from intentional interim pastor to transformational pastor of Tavistock Mennonite Church on Sept. 24. He has pastored in several congregations, including Harrow and Riverdale Mennonite, and served as a stewardship consultant with Mennonite Foundation of Canada in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. He and his wife Sharon both taught Bible and theology at Lithuania Christian University College. Life-long learning has taken Brown from Canadian Mennonite Brethren College (a founding college of Canadian Mennonite University), to Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, and to AMBS for his master of divinity degree in pastoral ministry. 
- **MICHELE RAE RIZOLI** became pastor of Toronto United Mennonite Church on July 1. She had been associate pastor there since August 2013. She graduated with a master of divinity degree from Emmanuel College at Toronto School of Theology in 2010. Previously, she worked with the Ecumenical Chaplaincy at the University of Toronto and has also done copy editing for MennoMedia. The church has been Rizoli’s home congregation since returning from Brazil in 1992. 
- **RANDELL NEUDORF** was ordained on Oct. 1 at The Commons, a Mennonite Church Eastern Canada congregation in downtown Hamilton, where he has been the pastor since 2011. He has previously worked for the Salvation Army as the manager of the Freeway Coffee House, and for the Living Rock in street youth ministry as a gang prevention worker, program manager and chaplain. In addition to being a pastor, Neudorf currently works with at-risk youth at the Re-create Art Studio, where he is an outreach worker and the mentorship program co-coordinator. To prepare for his ordination, he took classes at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo on peacemaking and Anabaptist history, and completed MC Eastern Canada’s Transitioning into Ministry program. 

—BY DAVE ROGALSKY

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

Congo crisis grinds on

Mennonites in middle of desperation

BY WILL BRAUN
Senior Writer

“As many as 250,000 children could starve in Kasai in the next few months unless enough nutritious food reaches them quickly,” says David Beasley, World Food Programme’s executive director, in an Oct. 30 release.

Kasai is a region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo suffering the aftermath of a gruesome armed conflict that displaced an estimated 1.4 million people, including thousands of Mennonites. The region is the birthplace of the Mennonite church in Congo, a church that is more than 200,000 strong.

In August, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) reported 36 confirmed deaths of Mennonites in Congo, 12 church schools destroyed or attacked, 16 churches destroyed or attacked, 342 homes destroyed, and thousands displaced.

While the mass killings and razing of villages—perpetrated by so-called rebels, government-backed forces and ethnically charged militias—have abated, a degree of lawlessness and paranoia has followed. Age-old tensions between ethnic groups in the region have flared up.

MCC coordinates emergency response

Some displaced people have returned, but many have not. Some have nothing to return to, says Bruce Guenther, MCC’s director of disaster response.

In addition to the lingering destruction and trauma, the economic situation in this particularly poor part of one of the poorest countries in Africa has become desperate. In many areas, the conflict has caused people to miss two planting seasons. The value of the national currency has also dropped significantly.

MCC is coordinating an emergency response shaped and implemented by

Congolese Mennonite church organizations and supported by Anabaptist organizations in Canada, the U.S., France and Switzerland. The response has involved distribution of a month’s supply of food, along with tarps and soap to 460 displaced families in Kitwit and Tshikapa. The value of the aid to date is \$157,000.

In an MCC release, Fidele Kyanza, who helped coordinate the response, says that, due to a lack of camps for displaced people, many families have taken in people who fled their homes. “Many times, a very poor family is receiving another very poor family into their home,” he says. “When you give support and aid to those families, you give harmony and peace.”

Mennonite World Conference reported in the summer that Mennonite churches in neighbouring Angola had taken in Mennonite and other refugees from the Kasai region. Pastors in one area of Angola reported more than 3,500 Mennonite refugees from Kasai, including 290 unaccompanied children, living outside refugee camps, in Mennonite churches or with church members.

The UN reports that only a small percentage of the funds required to address the Kasai crisis have been secured from the international community.

Mulanda Jimmy Juma, MCC’s representative in Congo, says: “Very few organizations are providing assistance, despite the high level of need. In the name of Christ, MCC wants to help meet the needs of these vulnerable people who are suffering because of the crisis in Kasai.”

Problems on the ground

A church worker involved in recent meetings in the Kasai region reports that some people, who hoped to attend, could not due to financial constraints or security



Highlighted in grey is the conflict zone within the Congo. Missing from the map is the country of Rwanda.

concerns related to the conflict. Many who did travel to the workshops from surrounding villages were worried about returning home, as the money they had set aside for travel had been taken from them at the many roadblocks in the region.

The worker—not with MCC—asked not to be named for security reasons. He reports having been asked for money almost every time police or military personnel saw him, something that did not happen prior to the rebellion.

He also reports an instance in which a soldier duped a poor village woman into selling him a small quantity of charcoal for about 25 cents less than the price she had set. When the woman, seven months pregnant, tried to get the charcoal back from the soldier, he shot her in the abdomen. She later died. There was no investigation into the death. He says people feel they have no recourse.

The church worker also says that the people do not look to the government for hope. Rather, when caring people show up, willing to share at some level in the suffering, that is their source of hope. “We all need saving in that sense,” he says. “We all need love.”

Guenther says MCC is planning for further distributions, and encourages



CANADIAN MENNONITE MAP BY BETTY AVERY
*Kasai region of the Democratic Republic of the
 vanda, which is also affected by the conflict.*

MCC PHOTO BY RACHEL BERGEN
*Christine Ndaya, who is displaced from
 Mbuji-Mayi in the Kasai region, is
 holding a tarp that is part of supplies
 distributed in Kikwit District of the
 Democratic Republic of the Congo. She
 is pregnant and has three children, who
 also are benefitting from food, which is
 also part of the supplies.*



WORK WITH MCC

MCC Ontario EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MCC Ontario is seeking a leader with a strong connection to Anabaptist values. The new Executive Director will effectively guide a diverse constituency in bringing relief, development and peace in the name of Christ.

More info available at: mcco.ca/serve

Mennonite Central Committee

donations, which will, in part, determine the extent of subsequent assistance. ☘

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The current feature exhibit, "Reformation or Reformations" marks the 500-year anniversary of Martin Luther's posting of the 95 theses.

METZGER COLLECTION

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CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM DIALOGUE: ALBERTA

Two friends, two faiths

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent
EDMONTON

At a time when world news seems to set nations against each other, the chatter and laughter of an obviously diverse crowd can be inspiring.

On Oct. 28, men and women of a variety of races and ages wore hijabs, clerical collars, T-shirts and suit jackets while mixing together and enthusiastically engaging in the fifth annual Christian-Muslim dialogue at St. Matthias Anglican Church, where Rector David Tiessen said, “Interfaith dialogue is no longer an option, if it ever was. It is a necessity.”

This year’s event was meant to feature two scholars and friends: Muhammad Ali Shomali of the United Kingdom and Harry Huebner of Winnipeg. Unfortunately, illness prevented Huebner from participating. In his stead, Irma Fast Dueck and Huebner’s son, Chris, both professors at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, shared the stage with Shomali.

The questions, “Why is dialogue valuable?” and, “What has changed for you because of it?” were posed to the speakers and then discussed around tables. With humility and passion, the speakers shared personal stories of a shared love for God.

“We have come from God, but we have been separated,” Shomali said, adding, “We have to find our way back. God is our destination.”

Fast Dueck talked of how she has valued and learned from her Muslim friends. “When we recognize differences, we can begin to understand each other,” she said.

While many in the crowd had been to previous dialogues, there was a significant number of newcomers as well. Anglicans Susan Daniel and Carol Gonnet, who have lived in places where they had few opportunities to interact with Muslims, came to the event because, as Daniel said, it was “an opportunity to have personal contact with Muslims and other [non-Anglican] Christians. It was a very positive connection!” Both Daniel and Gonnet were able to ask questions of Muslims at their table, which helped dispel their fears of the “other.”

After the dialogue, a young woman, Nuura Mohamoud, said, “An event like this changes my life!” She initially hadn’t wanted to give up her free time to attend, but her friend, who attends a discussion group with Donna Entz, a Mennonite



Nuura Mohamoud says of the Christian-Muslim dialogue, ‘An event like this changes my life!’ She was amazed at how much there is to learn about each other, even when, and perhaps especially when, people believe they have their life and faith all figured out.

Church Alberta outreach worker who builds bridges between Christians and Muslims, convinced her to go.

In spite of believing she would not be changed by the dialogue, Mohamoud was inspired. She said she was amazed at the diversity of Christians at her table, and inspired by the speakers and the open-minded discussions that followed. She was especially impacted by Shomali’s words that Christians and Muslims should not be fighting, and that conflict resolution needs to start within people’s close relationships, their families and friends, and then it can spread. “You think you have it all figured out and then . . . I left with new perspectives and my purpose was renewed,” she said.

The “Two friends, two faiths” event ran from Oct. 25 to 30, with a variety of discussion venues: the Islamic Shia Ithna Asheri Association, Kings University, the University of Alberta, St. Matthias, First Mennonite Church, Trinity Lutheran Church, and the University of Alberta Augustana campus in Camrose. ❧



Scholars Muhammad Ali Shomali, left, and Irma Fast Dueck enjoy a break at the fifth annual Christian-Muslim dialogue in Edmonton during the last week of October.

MENNONITE-MUSLIM DIALOGUE: ONTARIO

Breaking bread together

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent

WATERLOO, ONT.

Palmer Becker began to attend the Kitchener (Ont.) Masjid when he returned from teaching at Bethlehem Bible College in 2009. While in Bethlehem, he had heard the daily calls to prayer and had gone to pray at the mosque.

When questioned why he hadn't gone to the Church of the Nativity instead, he said, "I heard your call to pray, and this is close to my house." He was welcomed, and his regular attendance, about twice a week, led to many discussions.

One day he realized that he had put on someone else's shoes as he left. When he returned them that evening, they laughed together. "It was good to walk in the shoes of a Muslim for a day!" he said.

Becker's visits to the Kitchener Masjid led to Imam Muhammad Abuelezz coming to Waterloo North Mennonite Church, where Becker attends, to share Muslim views on God, revelation and Scripture, and in February the masjid hosted an open house to which Waterloo North was specifically invited. About 35 members went and, upon their return, several suggested

that the invitation be reciprocated.

On Oct. 22 about 40 congregants from the masjid joined Waterloo North for worship, lunch and an information time, including a question period with Troy Osborne, associate professor of history and theological studies at Conrad Grebel University College and a member at Waterloo North, who gave a brief overview of how Mennonites came to be, and what kinds of Mennonites might be seen in Waterloo Region.

Anne Brubacher shared about why some Mennonite women might wear head coverings, of great interest to the hijab-wearing Muslim women.

Gordon Allaby, Waterloo North's pastor, shared about the Mennonite peace position, and how this had drawn him into the Mennonite church.

John Peters and Ray Brubacher shared divergent views about missions. Brubacher, a former Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) worker in East Africa and the Middle East, shared about wondering if MCC's "In the name of Christ" motto would offend

Muslims receiving aid from the non-governmental organization, since the same words had been used by Crusaders in the Middle Ages. He said that one man had told him, "We're hungry. We'd accept food from even the devil."

In Iran, where MCC delivered aid after the 2003 earthquake, Brubacher said that someone likened Mennonites among Christians to Sufis among the Muslims: somewhat on the periphery, and focussed more on love than on proselytism.

Peters told stories of his work among the Yanomami in the Amazonian hinterland. There, the chief had asked to have the Spirit of Jesus to add to the other spirits he already had giving him power. Peters told him that if he had Jesus, he would have to give up the other spirits, a step the chief actually took.

In Ethiopia, he said that Mennonites went as medical workers since the Orthodox Church wouldn't allow missionaries. Using the Bible to teach English led to Ethiopians who wanted to be baptized. The Mennonites told them that they couldn't, so they found others who would, but came back to their communities to found Mennonite congregations.

Peters ended his presentation saying, "The church is the communication of the love, grace and mercy of God, and the call for us to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ."

Allaby added, "As long as I've been Mennonite, I've never been aware of Mennonites that I'm affiliated with going out and trying to change what someone believes, proselytizing. . . . If someone wants to learn more, we're open to that. . . . Most of what we call missions is assistance, going out and helping people in need."

During the question period, Amara Saeed asked about Mennonite thoughts on the nature of the Holy Spirit. Maahin Khan, a recent Kashmiri immigrant to Canada, had many questions, including, "Who do Mennonites pray to: God or Jesus?"

Afterwards, Becker said that he had been asked, "Why are we doing this?" to which he responded, "In Christian peace-building we make friends with those who might otherwise be our enemies!" ❧



While Palmer Becker, right, looks on, Maahin Khan and Aroob Asheaf from the Kitchener Masjid and Stephanie Janzen-Martin, from Waterloo North Mennonite Church exchange contact information at the end of Waterloo North Mennonite Church's open house with the masjid on Oct. 22.

'Our need for weed'

CMU panel discussion hopes to spark conversations in the church and community over the legalization of marijuana in Canada

STORY AND PHOTO BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

It's not often that you see the words Mennonite, church and university in the same sentence as marijuana. Yet, "Our need for weed? Sparking conversations in the church and community" was the title of the Nov. 15 Face2Face event at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU). A panel, which included a police officer, a rehabilitation counsellor, a medical cannabis producer and a Mennonite pastor, gathered with more than 100 audience members to discuss the implications of the Canadian government's plan to legalize marijuana.

Right now, selling and owning cannabis for non-medical reasons is still illegal in Canada. But the federal government's current plan is to legalize the production, sale and recreational consumption of marijuana as of July 1, 2018. The government also plans to implement strict regulations on marijuana, especially involving youth. It is putting \$36.4 million towards educating the public about cannabis over the next five years, according to Health Canada.

But regardless of how the government prepares for it, the legalization of marijuana will bring big changes to Canadian society. CMU wanted to host a discussion about weed, not to position itself, but to open up conversation with its community on how to deal with this potential new reality, said Terry Schellenberg, a CMU vice-president.

It was clear from the panel discussion that people have different opinions about such changes. Some believe these changes will be for the better, while others think quite the opposite.

Max Waddell, commander with the Organized Crime Division of the Winnipeg Police Service, warned those gathered that the legalization of cannabis probably would not change criminal involvement with the drug. Criminals could still capitalize on being able to work outside

regular business hours and likely sell the drug for less. He also spoke of the danger of driving under the influence of drugs and the effects the smoke can have on those exposed to it in public spaces, especially young people.

As a rehabilitation counsellor with the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, Daniel Dacombe works closely with young people. He said many young people in Canada believe that weed is safe, and everybody does it, although marijuana actually often creates long-term negative biological and psychological changes in young people's brains. Legalization of weed could put more young people at risk, he said. However, he also said that legalization would allow for more open conversations in schools and research about cannabis.

Bonify is a medical cannabis producer in Winnipeg that works with experts in the cannabis field and its customers to provide the best services for their individual needs. Nelson Martens, a Bonify representative, pointed out how life-changing medical cannabis can be for those suffering from serious illnesses. He also emphasized the importance of safe, high quality cannabis, as use of the drug increases.

Erin Morash, the pastor of Crystal City Mennonite Church and Trinity Mennonite Church in Mather, said she is neither against nor for the legalization of marijuana. Instead, she said the drug is a reality that already exists in Canadian communities, a reality people need to face. Legalization would merely make it official and likely increase the number of people who try weed.

She hopes legalization will open up conversations in the church, not only about marijuana but about larger topics like



A police officer, rehabilitation counsellor, medical cannabis producer and Mennonite pastor present their thoughts on the implications of the Canadian government's plan to legalize marijuana at 'Our need for weed? Sparking conversations in the church and community,' the Nov. 15 Face2Face event at Canadian Mennonite University.

addiction and dependency on substances, whether legal or not. Many people would like the church to stay silent about marijuana so they can pretend the issue doesn't exist, she said, but the church must face those realities. Why? "Because people that are using are in my foyer!" she said. "If I pretend they're not . . . I'm not doing my job."

People are often afraid to share in the church because they're afraid of being judged. Schellenberg said there were fewer people at CMU's Face2Face event than he had hoped. He heard several people say they didn't come because they didn't want to appear being in favour of drugs, or make people think they had personal or family issues involving drugs.

"We don't have very good systems for confession and healing. We have great systems for condemnation," said Morash. But she is hopeful that legalization may push the church to open up the conversation and change these systems. "The church actually has a role in talking about what it means when people get broken," she said. "Then we have to help them deal with the results of that." ❧

ARTBEAT

'Menno(Comedy)nite' keeps audience in stitches

STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

An advertised "evening of hilarity" on Sept. 30 delivered plenty of jokes, humour and laughs to delight the gathered audience at the Mennonite Historical Society of B.C.-sponsored event.

"We need to laugh. There are enough tears in the world," said emcee Danny Unrau, a pastor, storyteller and author who opened the evening with humorous tales from his personal life and ministry in the Mennonite Brethren church.

After his warm-up, the film *That Mennonite Joke* made its B.C. premiere. Orlando Braun, the film's producer, explained the background of the documentary that explores humour in Mennonite culture.

The second half of the evening featured Matt Falk, a Mennonite comedian from Niverville, Man., who travels all over Canada with his stand-up act and who once placed second in the World Series of Comedy. "I've never seen this many Mennonites at an event that wasn't free," quipped Falk, who performed a routine



Matt Falk, left, and Orlando Braun answer questions from the audience at the 'Menno(Comedy)nite' in Abbotsford, B.C., on Sept. 30.

based on Mennonite inside jokes and self-deprecating stereotypes.

Richard Thiessen, the historical society's director, explained that the organization had decided to "do something different, to celebrate another part of our Mennonite story." The event was not a fundraiser but merely an evening of entertainment.

A Jewish member of the audience, whose wife is of Mennonite background, said he could relate to the humour since the journeys of Jews and Mennonites share many similarities. ❧



Conrad Grebel University College alumni Amanda Kind (79) and Michael Klein belt out 'Man in the Mirror,' a Michael Jackson hit, at Grebel's 2017 Distinguished Alumni Service Award evening recently. The presentation was made near the end of a fundraiser concert entitled *Brave: A Concert Celebrating Courage, Compassion, and Community*, which exemplified many of the reasons Kind received the award. Aurora House, a project of Toronto United Mennonite Church that supports victims of human trafficking, received \$1,600.

/// Briefly noted

Uniting in song for B.C. ministries

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.—Singing and listening to traditional and favourite hymns drew some 200 people for the second Symphony of Hymns afternoon in support of Mennonite Church B.C. Sponsored by Columbia Kitchen Cabinets, the event took place at Level Ground Mennonite Church in Abbotsford on Nov. 19. The musical afternoon had goals of both fellowship and fundraising; more than \$14,000 was collected to support outreach ministries in B.C. Local professional or semi-professional musicians included violinist Calvin Dyck, pianist Mel Bowker, vocalist Michael Berg and flautist Alyssa Hordyk, along with an instrumental ensemble. "Calvin created a feeling of energy and enthusiasm in singing traditional hymns that have been sung for generations," said Gerry Grunau, chair of the regional church's finance committee that organized Symphony of Hymns. With memorial services taking place that same afternoon for slain Abbotsford police officer John Davidson, Lee Dyck, MC B.C.'s moderator, offered a prayer for peace and comfort for the Davidson family.

—BY AMY DUECKMAN



PHOTO BY CARLA HORDYK

Musicians lead in singing favourite church songs at MC B.C.'s second annual Symphony of Hymns fundraiser. Pictured from left to right: pianist Mel Bowker, violinist Calvin Dyck and clarinetist Chris Lee.

young voices



FBC PHOTOS BY RACHEL BERGEN

What started as a simple book club has become a place of deep friendship and support for a group of Winnipeg women.



'The novels, essays, memoirs and graphic novels I've read this year have challenged me immeasurably, and I've grown as a result,' Rachel Bergen writes.



Some members of the Feminist Book Club took part in a women's march in Winnipeg this past January to raise awareness about violence against women and to protest Donald Trump's presidency.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Finding shelter from the cold

This past year, a feminist book club saved my life

BY RACHEL BERGEN

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

I remember the day well. It was Nov. 8, 2016. Donald Trump, whose behaviour as a sexual predator has been widely reported, had just been elected as president of the United States. I felt the wind knocked out of me and, honestly, it felt like the world was ending.

At work the next day, at least three women came to me to weep on my shoulder and express their utter disgust and disbelief. After I went home for the day, I went straight to bed and cried all night. I felt afraid that such a person existed, but also that so many people supported him,

me a perfect opportunity to challenge sexist and racist narratives in the media, but also to work through a lot of the anger and fear I felt overwhelmed by.

In my wildest dreams, I never thought this book club would become such an important part of my life.

The books

The novels, essays, memoirs and graphic novels I've read this year have challenged me immeasurably, and I've grown as a result.

Books like *The Break* by Katherine

Discussing books by strong, thoughtful women seemed to me a perfect opportunity to challenge sexist and racist narratives in the media, but also to work through a lot of the anger and fear I felt overwhelmed by.

including white Christian women like me.

I wasn't the only one who felt this way.

The morning after the election, a friend of mine approached me to see if I'd be interested in joining a feminist book club (FBC). The email read: "This morning every bit of community-forming activity and discussion seems more important." I couldn't have agreed more.

I loved the idea of meeting with women who had similar thoughts, experiences and fears as I. Discussing books by strong, thoughtful women seemed to

Vermette, a Winnipeg-based Métis author, taught me about trauma that women inherit, especially Indigenous women, whether or not they've experienced abuse first-hand. The book weaves together stories of 10 characters to tell the story of a brutal crime inflicted on a girl, and how her family rallies around her. *The Break* is also an act of empathy—a novel that works to make sense of a brutal act of violence but doesn't arrive at easy answers for a difficult problem. I won't give much more away, because

everyone should read this book.

A Vindication on the Rights of Women by Mary Wollstonecraft took our book club back to the beginning of feminism—before the first wave even occurred in the 19th and 20th centuries—to 1792. In a supremely progressive take for the time, Wollstonecraft argues that women and men should have equal rights and opportunities, that women shouldn't be shamed for speaking their minds and that they should be able to enter politics. Although this book was a difficult read, it was important for our book club to learn about the origins of a movement we cling to now.

As much as we all love reading, our book club has morphed into something much bigger.

The people

Elise. Anna-Marie. Kerri. Meaghan. Mandy. Rachel. Sophia. Meghan. Emily. These women saved my life this year. Sure, we get together once a month to talk about the book we're reading, but it often turns into a group peer-counselling session.

Book club is a safe place for us to share about our experiences with misogyny.

When I'm cat-called or sexually harassed, the first people I share with are my FBC friends. When I was inappropriately touched by a stranger in the summer, I cried out to the book club. When we need advice about dealing with sexist coworkers, we turn to each other for advice. When we felt emotionally exhausted by the accounts of sexual assault and harassment on our Facebook timelines with the #MeToo movement, we talked about that together.

There is a cultural myth that female friendships are toxic and competitive; that each woman wants what the other has, and they will sabotage the friendship to get whatever that thing is. One of my favourite writers, Roxane Gay, writes in her book *Bad Feminist*, "This myth is like heels and purses—pretty but designed to slow women down."

Our book club has thrown that myth out the window. As individuals, we're unique, but our womanhood transcends all boundaries and gaps. We are leaning in to our femininity and finding shelter from the cold among each other. ♯

Rachel Bergen, 29, is a writer in Winnipeg. She is the former co-editor of Young Voices.



*The Feminist Book Club took a trip to a friend's cabin in May to rest, recharge, connect and talk about *Difficult Women* by Roxane Gay.*



PHOTO BY JAMES SOUDER

Rachel Bergen never anticipated that the Feminist Book Club would become such an important part of her life.

VIEWPOINT

The time is now

Men, we can all be better. Here are some suggestions how

BY AARON EPP

YOUNG VOICES EDITOR

In the remarkable documentary, *A Better Man*, released earlier this year, filmmaker Attiya Khan documents her meeting with Steve (no last name), her ex-boyfriend who abused her daily more than 20 years ago.

During a discussion over coffee, a counselling session and visits to the apartments they shared during their relationship, the two explore what happened and why, and the impact the abuse has had on Khan.

Not every man who is guilty of squeezing his hands around a woman's neck until she passes out would participate in such a documentary. My sense is that, for Steve, taking part in the film was an effort to become, as the title suggests, a better man.

It was fascinating to watch this documentary last month, given the recent glut of men who have been outed as abusers. Ever since Hollywood executive Harvey
(Continued on page 24)



NATIONAL FILM BOARD PHOTO

*Attiya meets with Steve, her abusive ex-boyfriend, in the documentary *A Better Man*.*



CANADIAN MENNONITE FILE PHOTO

Hollywood isn't the only place where men use their power to abuse women. Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder was guilty of the same.



NATIONAL FILM BOARD PHOTO

Steve and Attiya, pictured here in the early 1990s, show in A Better Man that all men can become better if they choose.

(Continued from page 23)

Weinstein was accused in early October of raping three women and sexually assaulting and harassing dozens more, the *New York Times* reports that more than 30 “high-profile men in a variety of industries have resigned, been fired or experienced other fallout after accusations that have ranged from inappropriate text messages to rape.”

In the Mennonite world, we have our own high-profile story that has come to light in recent years: the case of acclaimed peace theologian John Howard Yoder who systematically abused more than 100 women under the perverse guise that it was a theological project.

It has been difficult for me not to despair as I've read these stories of men who used their power to abuse women, and how those women felt they could not come forward.

At the same time, I know what I'm feeling is nothing compared to what women are feeling these days. While I'm only now waking up to the reality of just how severe the problem is, I know from the women around me that this is something they have been dealing with their entire lives. They don't get to choose whether or not to engage with this topic. For them, it's an everyday reality.

I'm going to assume that if you're a man and you're reading this article, you recognize the problem and you have some interest in being part of the solution. You want to follow Jesus when he says, in Matthew 7:12: *“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”*

“Men bear the responsibility to tear down the culture of toxic masculinity,” Paul Schrag wrote in a recent *Mennonite World Review* editorial. “One barrier to empathy is the male privilege of going through life without giving a thought to being sexually assaulted or harassed. The surest mark of privilege is to be unaware of it. But today all should be able to see the need for every man to affirm gender equality and deter sexualized violence.”

So what is a man to do? When we are confronted with the reality that the women around us have been oppressed for so long, and we have perpetuated a culture that disregards their voices, what

is the best way to respond?

Let me offer a few suggestions:

- **TAKE RESPONSIBILITY.** It's not up to women to point you in the right direction. They have been doing enough emotional labour their entire lives as it is. If you want to be part of the solution, it's going to mean taking responsibility for your participation in a society that has, for far too long, turned a blind eye to the violence committed towards women.

- **LISTEN. ASK** the women in your life what it's like living in a patriarchal society. Ask them about their experiences growing up in the church, where, as Schrag writes, men's entitlement to impose their will on women has been taken for granted, and often still is. Believe women. Don't argue with or second-guess them. Just listen.

- **READ. ARTICLES** like “A Manifesto on Ass-Grabbing” by Stephanie Krehbiel, “The Unforgiving Minute” by Laurie Penny, and “So You've Sexually Harassed or Abused Someone: What Now?” by Ijeoma Oluo, all offer important insights, and you can find them all via a quick internet search. OurStoriesUntold.com, an Anabaptist website that creates space for conversation around sexualized violence and its prevalence in communities of faith, is also a great place to start.

- **TALK. IF** you are unsure of what consent means, if you have trouble dealing with romantic rejection, if you struggle with what it means to “be a man,” I encourage you to talk about these things with other men. It might be a conversation with one or more of your friends, or it might mean seeking out an older man whom you respect and trust, so you can get his insight.

Embarking on this journey will be uncomfortable at times, but it will help in working towards a more just society in which everyone is treated equally, and all voices are heard. As Attiya and Steve show in the documentary, we can all become better men if we choose to. ✎



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— Janna Hunter-Bowman, PhD, assistant professor of peace studies and Christian social ethics



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Re-energizing Bible Studies

After teaching Old Testament in the Theological Studies program at Grebel for more than a decade, Professor Derek Suderman notes that he is most often asked how to address declining biblical literacy in congregations. “But it’s not primarily a question of literacy,” notes Suderman. “It’s a question of consistently engaging the Bible in a positive way. How do we provide leadership for a life-giving experience with the Bible?”

In response to that question, Suderman is teaching a course called Teaching the Bible this winter at Grebel. The main assignment will be to facilitate a multi-session Bible study and then reflect on the experience. “Leading a good Bible study is an essential skill – it should be funny, engaging, and enjoyable,” explains Suderman. “A good facilitator knows how to offer insight and knowledge, paces the group, and has the background to point out important aspects of the text. My goal as a leader is not to convince the group to think like I do, but rather to encourage the group to emerge with its own understanding.”

“The Bible should not be interpreted alone,” cautions Suderman. “it is meant to be studied and discussed in groups. We need to learn to trust the Bible and each other before we tackle big issues. If you interpret non-threatening ideas first, hearing multiple views without taking or giving offence, then you build a strong foundation for future conversations. We can again function as priesthood of all believers.”

Just as diversity in perspectives and backgrounds keeps a Bible study interesting, so does diversity in the Master of Theological Studies program. This ecumenical program attracts people from a wide theological spectrum. “When students come with different biblical translations and understandings, it spurs dialogue and reveals new questions. Through these ongoing conversations and inquiries, students build bridges, overcome communication challenges, and learn to explore deeply.” Suderman adds, “interpreting the Bible together is a profoundly counter-cultural activity. Done well, it prompts a different way of seeing the world.”

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CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

MTS Inspires and Grounds

Recent MTS graduate, Danielle Raimbault, is associate pastor at Listowel Mennonite Church in Ontario, as well as chaplain at a long-term care residence. Raimbault found her education to be instrumental in preparing for ministry in the church. “The Applied stream courses offered practical advice for the everyday of pastoral ministry,” noted Raimbault. “The Bible courses taught me in-depth ways to research and prepare for sermons. I learned how to read the Bible in ways that are more helpful and I gained a deeper understanding of the Bible and what it means to me. By understanding the context of the Bible—both at the time when it was written and as it is read today—the Bible becomes more personal to me.”



Pastoral Care, taught by Professor Carol Penner, was Raimbault’s favourite course. “Carol’s class put us in situations that I first assumed would not come up at all in pastoral care. But this class prepared me for situations that congregation members find themselves in every day. It taught me to be a better listener and to better understand myself as a pastoral caregiver.”

“With intense and good discussion around gender in the church, Allan’s preaching class was an amazing experience,” reflected Raimbault, after taking a course taught by Visiting Professor Allan Rudy-Froese from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. In response to this course, Raimbault and three other women are coordinating a women’s preaching conference called Empowered Women Preach. The mission of the conference is to raise a generation of Spirit-filled women who are encouraged and equipped to proclaim Christ for the renewal of their local church communities. For more information on this May 2018 conference, visit www.empoweredwomenpreach.com

Student Reflections

The program and atmosphere at Grebel is very conducive to recent graduates, as well as adults who are returning to school after many years of working in ministry, perhaps, as a lay pastor or teacher. It’s ideal for those who are interested to enrich their knowledge of theology, church history and ministry in a highly interactive atmosphere.

– M. Zeme, MTS student

During last year’s preaching course taught by Allan Rudy-Froese, the Bible was our key to countless doors. The scriptures, when reflected upon, wrestled with, written and rewritten, painted, played on pianos, taken outdoors and indoors, sung out loud, and shouted back and forth with friends became a vast landscape filled with adventure and discovery. Through the irreverent collision of scripture with real life I was able to hear God in a new way. I was able to speak of God in a new way; a more honest and dangerous way.

– Zach Charbonneau, MTS student

Understanding Biblical Context

Professor Alicia Batten teaches New Testament in Grebel’s Theological Studies program. She is writing a commentary on the Letter of James for the Illuminations Commentary Series—a close look at the letter as a whole, combined with attention to the reception of the letter and its impact over the centuries.



Because the books of the Bible were written in a different place and time than today, Batten emphasizes how “it is essential to study the cultures, societies, and religious and political ideas of the ancient world by studying literature, archaeology, history, and anthropology of the ancient Mediterranean. By understanding some of this background of the Bible,” she explains, “we can then approach the texts and lessen the risk that we might read them in an ethnocentric manner. We must be careful not to impose our own presuppositions and cultural mores on the biblical texts.”

“Biblical research benefits the church by providing tools and resources that people can use as they study the Bible together. Biblical research does not provide the final answer to what these ancient texts meant or mean, but it does point out that despite the multiplicity of conclusions that we may come to about the Bible, some conclusions are better than others.”

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Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford, B.C.

"Why are you here?" boomed the professor. "I'll tell you why you're here: to make money!"

It was Kurtis Kube's first marketing class at a public college. He was passionate about two things: his Christian faith and learning business skills. Small surprise that he found his professor's remarks disquieting. Would it be possible, he wondered, to integrate his love for Christ into his business studies?

Fast-forward to 2017. The holder of a master of business administration degree from Azusa Pacific University, Kube is now at the front of the classroom. Not only does he teach business and marketing courses at Columbia Bible College, he recently pioneered the school's new Diploma in Social Entrepreneurship program.

His desire? To give students the opportunity to develop both their faith and their

business acumen, learning to pursue both with integrity. What's especially unique about the program is its capstone class, Entrepreneurial Operations, in which students pitch an original business plan to a panel of local business leaders.

"The intention is to cultivate a creative entrepreneurial spirit," Kube explains. "It's exciting to think of our grads as game-changers."

In class, he encourages his students to use their newfound skills to find ways to steward creation, help the poor and make an impact on their communities. Outside class, he can be found coaching budding entrepreneurs on everything from promotion to pricing, or in passionate conversation with students who are grappling with how business and serving the kingdom can fit together. He's come a long way since that first marketing lecture.



Kurtis Kube, centre, is flanked by recent Columbia grad Frank Sawatsky, left, and college business administrator Scott Henderson, right.

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Schools Directory featuring COLUMBIA BIBLE COLLEGE and MENNONITE COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE

Joy found in the struggle

By Paul Peters, Mennonite Collegiate Institute, Winnipeg

Compartments—that’s often where we like to keep our emotions and feelings. In moments when we feel deep joy and connection, it’s hard to comprehend the struggle someone else might be feeling. In moments of deep sadness and challenge, it can often be hard to access happiness or gratefulness. I’ve been learning that sometimes it’s okay to find incredible joy and deep sadness in the same experience.

Early in the year, one of our students was seriously injured in a car accident. It was very hard for the student body, but what happened in the weeks that followed was incredibly beautiful. Our student body rallied around the injured student by creating personalized “get well” cards from each student, visiting the person in the hospital or at home, and cheering when the person showed up at school for the first time after the accident.

When walking the halls of the school, it’s

common practice to say, “How are you?” Our response usually goes something like this: “I’m okay,” or “I’m great,” or “Awesome.” The time and space while passing someone by doesn’t allow us to go any deeper: We get the dominant emotion or the pat answer.

I’ve personally been inspired and honoured by the stories I’ve been invited into this year, and the opportunities to ask, “What do you mean by okay?” and to journey with students as they acknowledge their hurts but find the glimmer of hope in a friendly smile or hug they received from a friend that day.

This is community. This is where belonging is found: In places where we become each other’s joy when all we can see is sadness, or the reminder that our joy can come at someone else’s cost.

Paul Peters is MCI’s director of student life.



An exercise in chapel helps to build connection and community.

GRADE 9 NIGHT
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UpComing

MennoMedia seeks input toward projection edition of new hymnal

In 2020, MennoMedia plans to release a new worship and song collection for Mennonite Church Canada and MC U.S.A. in multiple formats. “This is an exciting time for us at MennoMedia. We know how to create bound books but we have never before created a projection edition or an app edition,” says Amy Gingerich, MennoMedia’s editorial director. “We want to consider the projection needs and preferences of each congregation.” To create the new projection edition, MennoMedia invites congregations and individuals with audiovisual experience in congregations to fill out a new survey at bit.ly/projection-survey. The short survey asks questions about whether congregations currently project notated music, song texts, both or neither; whether they project worship resources; and what formats they anticipate they will want when the new collection is made available in 2020. The full suite of products related to the worship and song collection will include an accompaniment book and a worship leader edition. To find out more, visit MennoMedia.org/Resonate.

—MennoMedia

World Fellowship Sunday resources now available

The annual Mennonite World Conference (MWC) World Fellowship Sunday—normally held on the last Sunday in January—is an opportunity to help congregants around the world become aware of what it means to belong to a global Anabaptist faith community. Churches in the Global South are especially attentive to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. World Fellowship Sunday 2018 worship resources have been prepared by regional representatives from Africa. “On this day, we celebrate that, in Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, the cultural and national boundaries that separate us have been overcome by the cross,” says MWC general secretary César García. The prayers, songs, biblical interpretation, personal stories and cultural suggestions for worship included in the package invite everyone to worship in the style of African Anabaptist churches today. To download the 2018 resources, including photos and videos, visit mwc-cmm.org/wfs. MWC also invites a special offering to be taken for the global Anabaptist church movement on World Fellowship Sunday.

—Mennonite World Conference



PHOTO BY LIESA UNGER

Singing in a worship service in a congregation in Kisumu, part of the Kenya Mennonite Church.

Calendar

Alberta

June 30-July 1, 2018: Springridge Mennonite Church, Pincher Creek, is celebrating its 90th anniversary. All past and present congregants are invited. RSVP to delwillms@gmail.com. For more information, visit springridgemennonitechurch.ab.ca.

Manitoba

Jan. 26, 2018: Opening of exhibition of art from First Nation communities, at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit gallery.mennonitechurch.ca.

Feb. 2, 2018: CMU campus visit day.

For more information, visit cmu.ca/campusvisit.

Feb. 5, 2018: Face2Face panel discussion at CMU’s Marpeck Commons, at 7 p.m. Topic: “Is ‘sola scriptura’ a Reformation slogan that matters in the church today?”

Feb. 6-7, 2018: ReNew: Resourcing Pastors for Ministry conference for pastors and all those involved in ministry, at CMU, Winnipeg. Topic: “Delighting in Scripture: Sola Scriptura at 500 years.” Includes a half-day preaching clinic. For more information, visit cmu.ca/renew.

Feb. 9, 2018: Discover Outtown visit day, at CMU, Winnipeg. For more information, visit cmu.ca/campusvisit.

Feb. 11, 2018: CMU Men’s Chorus festival, at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

OnNow

Household items turned into art

WINNIPEG—The last thing you might expect to see in an art gallery is a washcloth well-worn from cleaning, or an old, stained lampshade. Yet this is what the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery is displaying on its walls until Jan. 20, 2018. Two exhibitions—“Work as prayer/Prayer as work” by Carolyn Mount and “Sacred DNA: Family and icons” by Tracy Fehr—transform used household items into beautiful artwork.

• **MOUNT** embroidered an assortment of used rags that reflect on the everyday life and work that shape who people are. Instead of trying to fix these cloths so they can be useful again, Mount says she honours them as they are because “each stain and worn-out place speaks to a life lived.” Each stitch represents prayer and how it evolves throughout people’s lives.



‘Work as prayer/Prayer as work No. 9’

• **FEHR’S FAMILY** history, both Métis and Mennonite, inspired her series of clay bowls and embroidered cloths, sheets and lampshades. Her mother taught her about ritual and sacrifice, and her father about working hard with her hands, which has made creating art an act of prayer for Fehr. Inspired by both iconography and archaeological digs, Fehr describes her work as “an intimate story of roots, culture and worship.”



‘Leah in bloom’

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

Feb. 15, 2018: CMU presents the 13th-annual Verna Mae Janzen Music Competition, in the Laudamus Auditorium, at 7 p.m.

March 2, 2018: Music Therapy Coffee House, at CMU's Great Hall, at 7 p.m.

March 9, 2018: CMU campus visit day. For more information, visit cmu.ca/campusvisit.

March 15-16, 2018: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate junior-high students present three one-act plays, at the Centre culturel franco-manitobain.

March 16, 2018: Opening of exhibits by Anthony Chiarella and Faye Hall at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit gallery.mennonitechurch.ca.

March 21, 2018: Bach on the Bridge, at CMU's pedestrian bridge.

Ontario

Dec. 15-17: Listowel Mennonite Church presents "An Advent Journey Marketplace": (15 and 16) from 7 to 9 p.m.; (17) from 2 to 4 p.m. and 7 to 9 p.m. For more information, call 519-291-2350.

Dec. 16,17: Pax Christi Chorale

presents "Gloria" by Poulenc, and other works, including French carols, at Grace Church on-the-Hill, Toronto: (16) at 7:30 p.m.; (17) at 3 p.m.

Dec. 17: Menno Singers presents "Singalong Messiah," at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, at 3 p.m. For more information, visit mennosingers.com.

Jan. 12-14, 2018: Fathers and kids retreat at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp, Sauble Beach. To register online, visit slmc.ca/retreats.

Feb. 9-11, 2018: Women's winter retreat at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp, Sauble Beach. To register, visit slmc.ca/retreats.

Feb. 25, 2018: Menno Singers presents "Midwinter Hymn Sing," at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Kitchener, at 7 p.m. For more information, visit mennosingers.com.

March 2-4, 2018: Winter camp for grown-ups (20- and 30-somethings) at Silver Lake Camp, Sauble Beach. To register, visit slmc.ca/retreats.

U.S.A.

Feb. 2-4, 2018: Mennonite Arts Weekend 2018, at Pleasant Ridge

Presbyterian Church, Cincinnati, Ohio. Canada's Theatre of the Beat will be among the featured performers. For more information, visit mennoniteartsweekend.org.

March 16-17, 2018: Mennonites and the Holocaust conference, at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan. Featured speaker: Doris Bergen, who holds the Chancellor Rose and Ray Wolfe Chair in Holocaust studies at the University of Toronto. For more

information, visit mla.bethelks.edu/MennosandHolocaust.

To ensure timely publication of upcoming events, please send Calendar announcements eight weeks in advance of the event date by email to calendar@canadianmennonite.org. For more Calendar listings online, visit canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar.

Classifieds

Employment Opportunities



CAMPUS HOSTS

Conrad Grebel University College
at the University of Waterloo

Conrad Grebel University College, a residence and teaching community affiliated with the University of Waterloo, seeks a married couple for the position of **Campus Hosts** (formerly known as Senior Residents), beginning **spring 2018**. The role involves living in an apartment in the College's residence building and supervising the College during non-business hours. Rent and utilities are free in exchange for performance of duties. Applicants should be mature, responsible and able to relate to a broad range of people, especially students in residence.

Application deadline is January 8, 2018

Read more at grebel.ca/positions



Leamington United
Mennonite Church

Employment opportunity

Leamington United Mennonite Church, an active congregation in southwestern Ontario, is looking for an individual to join our existing pastoral team as a full-time associate pastor.

The focus for this associate pastor will include primary responsibilities for youth ministry with further duties adapted to complement the three continuing team members. The candidate will share the congregation's strong Anabaptist theology and growing community initiatives. Weekly attendance averages about 225 in the multi-generational worship service with an additional 100 or more participating through remote TV in the local Mennonite Home & Apartments. Flexible starting time during 2018. Compensation according to MC Canada pastoral salary guidelines.

Contact: Erwin Tiessen, Search Committee, 519-733-9940, etiessen@cogeco.ca.

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