

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

May 13, 2019 Volume 23 Number 10

## Harvesting *manoomin* at 'Shooniversity'

Reflection at the close of the Indigenous Peoples Solidarity Team, pg. 12

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## EDITORIAL

# Holding out the Christ-light

Virginia A. Hostetler  
EXECUTIVE EDITOR



**“W**e can all have good mental health. It is about having a sense of purpose, strong relationships, feeling connected to our communities, knowing who we are, coping with stress and enjoying life,” says a statement by the Canadian Mental Health Association.

Statistics indicate that each year 6.7 million Canadians—one in five people—experience some form of mental illness. By age 40, that number increases to one in two people. Sadly, about 1.6 million citizens report they don’t have adequate care for mental-health needs.

Here are some messages we can offer to each other as we deal with mental illness:

## ‘You deserve to be well.’

In a recent conversation I had with someone struggling with anxiety and depression, the question of worthiness came up. Growing up in a household where affirmation rarely happened, feeling broken and inadequate, this person did not feel worthy of a better life.

Sometimes we need to remind each other: Each person is God’s beloved child, made in God’s image, and is deserving of a fulfilling life. The Creator’s wish is for all to experience healing and wellness.

## ‘You can talk about it. I will listen. I will help.’

I once participated in a congregation that demonstrated an unusual ability to support congregants going through

tough times. In Sunday sharing times, a woman spoke openly about her ongoing struggle with an eating disorder. A couple talked about their family member’s schizophrenia and the challenges it had for them. A recovering alcoholic told of how he was using his past addiction experiences to minister to others. As congregants listened and learned about each other’s vulnerabilities, we were able to offer prayers, understanding and practical support.

## ‘Things will get better.’

There was a time when life looked hopeless to me. Struggling with deep depression, I could not imagine how things could ever change for the better. A doctor friend helped me get access to medication, encouraged me to pursue counselling and reassured me, “Things will get better.” In my lowest times, I held on to that reassurance. Thanks be to God, with time and the proper support, my depression lifted.

People struggling with long-term anxiety, addictions, depression, schizophrenia and other ailments know that there is no magic cure. But, with God’s help, the right treatments and support, with self-care and with the care of a loving community, things can get better.

The song “Will You let Me be your Servant,” No. 307 in *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, captures some of the opportunities before us. As companions on the journey toward wellness, we can “help each other walk the mile and bear the load.”

Verse 3 says: “I will hold the Christ-light for you / in the night-time of your

fear. / I will hold my hand out to you, / speak the peace you long to hear.”

In the today’s feature “When it’s hard to go to church” (page 4), former pastor Donita Wiebe-Neufeld considers how a congregation might walk alongside people dealing with mental illness and other hard life issues. In “Breaking through the screen” (page 18), parents and educators are reminded that students’ time with technology can have negative effects on their mental and social health. A sponsored content story (not available online) tells the story of someone who experiences a strong connection between meaningful employment and mental well-being.

On our journey toward healing, let’s keep figuring out ways to hold the Christ-light out to each other in our families, churches and communities.

## Same columnist / new name

You will notice a new byline on page 21. On April 20, B.C. correspondent Amy Dueckman celebrated her marriage to Marc Waddell. She now writes under her new byline, Amy Rinner Waddell. We wish the newlyweds much happiness!

## Corrections

Two corrections are needed to the “MC Canada primer” story, which ran in the April 29 issue. Concerning the new Witness funding model, support teams are asked to raise at least half of the funding needed to support International Witness workers. Also, Nhien Pham is not a Witness worker; he currently works with North American Vietnamese Evangelical Fellowship, which is an MC Canada partner. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the errors.

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Kathy Moorhead Thiessen, a member of Christian Peacemaker Teams' Indigenous Peoples Solidarity (IPS) team, harvested *manoomin* (wild rice) at Grassy Narrows in northwestern Ontario last year. CPT discontinued the IPS program at the end of March due to a lack of funding. See story on page 12.

PHOTO: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES SOLIDARITY TEAM

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## CANADIAN MENNONITE

Phone: 519-884-3810 Toll-free: 1-800-378-2524 Fax: 519-884-3331

Website: [canadianmennonite.org](http://canadianmennonite.org)

Facebook.com/Canadian.Mennonite @CanMenno

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**Board Chair,** Henry Krause, [hakrause@telus.net](mailto:hakrause@telus.net), 604-888-3192

### Canadian Mennonite Staff:

**Publisher,** Tobi Thiessen, [publisher@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:publisher@canadianmennonite.org)

**Executive Editor,** Virginia A. Hostetler, [editor@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:editor@canadianmennonite.org)

**Managing Editor,** Ross W. Muir, [managinged@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:managinged@canadianmennonite.org)

**Online Media Manager,** Aaron Epp, [onlinemgr@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:onlinemgr@canadianmennonite.org)

**Contributing Editor,** Rachel Bergen, [contribed@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:contribed@canadianmennonite.org)

**Editorial Assistant,** Barb Draper, [edassist@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:edassist@canadianmennonite.org)

**Graphic Designer,** Betty Avery, [designer@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:designer@canadianmennonite.org)

**Circulation/Finance,** Lisa Jacky, [office@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:office@canadianmennonite.org)

**Advertising Manager,** D. Michael Hostetler, [advert@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:advert@canadianmennonite.org),  
toll-free voice mail: 1-800-378-2524 ext. 224

**Senior Writer,** Will Braun, [seniorwriter@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:seniorwriter@canadianmennonite.org)

**B.C. Correspondent,** Amy Rinner Waddell, [bc@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:bc@canadianmennonite.org)

**Alberta Correspondent,** vacant

**Saskatchewan Correspondent,** Donna Schulz, [sk@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:sk@canadianmennonite.org)

**Manitoba Correspondent,** Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe, [mb@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:mb@canadianmennonite.org)

**Eastern Canada Correspondent,** Janet Bauman, [ec@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:ec@canadianmennonite.org)

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(phone) 1-800-378-2524 ext. 221

## FEATURE

# When it's hard to go to church

BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD  
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*



PHOTO LEFT: © ISTOCK.COM/BERNARDBODO / PHOTO RIGHT: © ISTOCK.COM/SEVENTYFOUR

**The late Rachel Held Evans suggested that the church needs to feel less like a country club, where everyone is well put together, and more like an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, where brokenness is acknowledged, truth is told and questions are welcome as an important part of being a Christian community.**

“I love my church. It is very important to me, but you won’t be seeing me on Sunday morning as often,” Cara Baergen told her congregation in a sermon preached at Edmonton’s First Mennonite Church this spring.

Consciously choosing to speak from a music stand away from the pulpit, she candidly named hard experiences, health issues and questions of faith that make it difficult for her to show up for worship services. She explained that trying to hide pain and live up to expectations, self-imposed and otherwise, is like wearing a mask. It’s uncomfortable and takes huge energy to maintain.

While this mask serves a useful purpose, allowing participation in community, at the same time it also blocks healthy change in individuals and congregations by hiding the issues. No one wants to “break down” in public, so pretending everything is fine often feels preferable to the risk of having to answer too many “How are you doing?” questions that can drain already depleted emotional reserves. Finally, when the mask is too much to bear, even people who still value their faith and their church will stop attending.

Baergen is far from alone in finding it difficult to be at church. Grief, loss of a job, feelings of inadequacy, faith struggles, depression, shyness, relationship issues, church politics, financial struggle—or even the basic lack of someone to shovel a driveway—can keep people at home on Sunday morning. And missing a few Sundays can make it harder and harder to return.

After a spouse left, “Kelly” (a pseudonym) struggled to go to church. Even though the congregation was supportive, “that crush of well-intentioned people—they were genuine, but I couldn’t handle it—that look of pity that people give you,” she said.

Compounding the difficulties was the shattered expectation that people of faith are supposed to be able to keep their marriages together, even more so when they are leaders in the church. Kelly needed faith and the church

community at exactly the time it was the hardest to face those broken expectations. She found it was easiest to arrive late and leave early to avoid questions. “If I couldn’t handle going to my own church, I went to another one where not too many people knew me,” she said. “I could go into a back row and cry through the service.”

#### **A church without masks**

*Searching for Sunday: Loving, Leaving, and Finding the Church* by the late Rachel Held Evans exposes many reasons people have for avoiding church as well as thoughtful approaches to address the pain behind their absences. Using statistics from the United States in 2015, she claimed that “59 percent of young people ages 18 to 29 with a Christian background have dropped out of church.”

In Canada, the ground-breaking 2012 study, “Hemorrhaging Faith,” concluded that two out of every three young adults were leaving the church. Anecdotally, it appears the trend affects adults as well. Congregations have shrunk, adult Sunday school classes struggle to continue and volunteer positions are difficult to fill. Many people seem to be either actively or passively avoiding Sunday morning attendance at church.

Evans wrote: “[W]e long for our churches to be safe places to doubt, to ask questions, and to tell the truth, even when it’s uncomfortable. We want to talk about the tough stuff—biblical interpretation, religious pluralism, sexuality, racial reconciliation and social justice—but without predetermined conclusions or simplistic answers. We want to bring our whole selves through the church doors, without leaving our hearts and minds behind, without wearing a mask.”

The church as a place of belonging and acceptance in the midst of struggle was an attractive concept for Evans. She suggested that the church needs to feel less like a country club, where everyone is well put together, and more like an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, where brokenness is acknowledged, truth is told and questions are welcome as an important part of being a Christian

community. “[N]o decent AA meeting ever began with, ‘Hi, my name is Rachel, and I totally have my act together,’” she wrote.

Evans advocated for a church without “masks,” that welcomes doubt, struggle and questioning. “We come in search of sanctuary, a safe place to shed the masks and exhale,” she wrote. “We come to air our dirty laundry before God and everybody because when we do it together we don’t have to be afraid.”

She didn’t like the idea that people have to have their lives fixed and faith intact before coming to church, likening that attitude to feeling you have to be in shape before joining a fitness club or that the house has to be clean before the hired housekeeper arrives. “We think church is for the healthy, even though Jesus told us time and time again he came to minister to the sick,” she wrote.

#### **Addressing pain and loss in church**

One issue that causes people to feel they can’t attend church is how the gathered faith community addresses pain and loss, both corporately and on an individual basis.

Kelly commented that the church, in general, does not lament well. It tends to expect grief to be dealt with and packed away, often quicker than is possible for the person who is experiencing loss. “As a church, if we could understand grieving better, we’d understand that it goes on and on,” she said. “People can look okay and not be. You can be very functional, and not be healed.”

Even though it was hard to find a place to be authentic and open with pain during Sunday morning services, there were times when Evans did find helpful responses to grief. At one church, a trained spiritual caregiver was quietly made available for prayer and anointing to those who were hurting.

At Kelly’s own church, a number of sermons seemed perfectly tailored for her. Messages of hope, courage and even mercy provided words for the journey through loss with all its twists and turns.

Perhaps one of the most helpful ways

to address the concept of struggling to go to church during difficult times is to revisit the definition of church and the ways people are involved with it.

Church is much more than a building, a one-hour service on Sunday morning, or a pastor who is always available to everyone. The expectation that the church and its pastor can “be all things to all people” on a Sunday morning is obviously unrealistic, yet it is regularly a part of the expectations people bring with them to church. But, when the definition of church is understood as being a people of God, rather than a building, the idea of attendance and engagement with the church encompasses more than a Sunday service.

Both Cara and Kelly found that individual church members who reached out and were there for them were “the church” at critical times, especially when they felt they could not participate fully in the public worship service. Sometimes, showing up at worship and staying at the back of the sanctuary was enough, allowing them to hear what was being said and sung, enabling engagement with a few people, and providing the option of a quick exit when they felt overwhelmed.

Kelly said that one of her pastors had a helpful definition of church: “She always referred to Sunday morning as ‘worship’ [not church]. She said ‘church’ is what we do with our everyday lives.” She added: “I remember somebody asking me about prayer at that time [during crisis]. My response was that I am dependent on the prayers of others. . . . The challenge for the rest of us is that you too might be called to be the church in a private way, not in that public hour.”

Thinking of the church as a people instead of a place helps those who are struggling with issues to feel connected even when they cannot bring themselves to attend large public services. There are also ways a congregation can work to make public gathering times more welcoming to those who struggle to attend:

• **Offering quiet spaces** and times for

prayer and connection with spiritual directors, elders or deacons may provide non-threatening opportunities for those with questions and struggles to find a safe place to work through those without having to worry about becoming emotional or expressing difficult thoughts and doubts.

• **Small evening gatherings**, such as Taizé, prayer vigils or healing services, can invite people to bring pain and issues to a small group that is a less-intimidating place for struggle and worship to co-exist.

Another thing a congregation can do is publicly process difficult issues, and consistently work at the tasks of handling disagreements and conflicts in respectful, open ways while avoiding gossip. While it may feel counter-intuitive for a community to be attractive to newcomers while being open about its problems, this approach attracts those who are looking for faith to be relevant to life’s issues.

Asked about how sharing her story

publicly affected her, Baergen said: “It was terrifying beforehand and felt amazing immediately after, with all the love and support I got from everyone. It has led to some really interesting conversations...”

Evans encouraged her readers to “[i]magine if every church became a place where everyone is safe, but no one is comfortable. Imagine if every church became a place where we told each other the truth. We might just create sanctuary.” ❧



*Donita Wiebe-Neufeld is Canadian Mennonite’s former Alberta correspondent. She currently works for Mennonite Central Committee Alberta.*

*Rachel Held Evans, 37, died on May 4 in Nashville of extensive brain swelling. She was placed in a medically induced coma on April 19 after treatment for an infection led to brain seizures.*

### /// For discussion

1. Has attendance dropped at your church in recent years? Is this because people have completely stopped coming or because many people come less often? What are your reasons for missing church?
2. Do you find it difficult to go to church when you’re feeling vulnerable? Do you sometimes wear a mask in order to feel “good enough”? Are there other reasons why we sometimes hide behind masks?
3. Does your Sunday worship experience feel more like a country club or an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting? Does it feel like a comfortable place to ask hard questions, a place that welcomes doubt and struggle? Are there opportunities to be authentic and open? What does it mean to think of the church as a people rather than a place?
4. Donita Wiebe-Neufeld quotes from Rachel Evans: “Imagine if every church became a place where everyone is safe, but no one is comfortable. Imagine if every church became a place where we told each other the truth.”

—By Barb Draper

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## /// Readers write

### ✉ A shotgun is 'a tool to put meat on the table'

Re: "Swords into ploughshares, guns into art,"  
March 4, page 23.

A great sculpture. Irian Fast-Sittler does great work; keep it up! But I do have a problem with Paul Dyck calling this old shotgun a "weapon."

When I was a young boy, living out on a farm in the mid-1930s, my father used a shotgun, much like the one in the sculpture, to put fresh meat on our table. He would go shoot a few jack rabbits, take the meat and grind it, and my mother would make meatballs fried in a bit of pork lard. What a feast! He would also shoot ducks and prairie chickens. Fresh meat was a real treat for our family of nine.

That shotgun was a tool to put meat on our table; it was never used to threaten or kill a human being. I believe it is a terrible thing to use anything to kill another human being. But are you aware of what things are used to kill people?

I went online and checked out how many homicides there were in Winnipeg, a city of over 700,000, in 2018. The police report 27 homicides; 12 were caused by blunt force trauma; 11 were killed with a knife. (Any knife that is sharp, pointed and has four inches of blade length can be used to kill a person; I checked our kitchen and found nine knives that fit this description, with another 10 in my workshop for hunting, filleting, meat-cutting and utility.) Four homicides were committed with guns.

All the homicides were wrong, brutal and senseless. Most of the guns used in mass shootings are guns made for war (for killing people). The one in the sculpture was made to be a tool to put meat on the table.

JAKE NEUFELD, BOISSEVAIN, MAN.

### ✉ Writer compares *Women Talking* to Plato's *Republic*

Re: "Women Talking is a 'human story . . . a work

*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](mailto:letters@canadianmennonite.org) and include the author's contact information and mailing address. Preference is given to letters from MC Canada congregants.*

of art'" letter, April 15, page 7.

Thank you to Evelyn Hoepfner for her letter.

For me, Miriam Toews's novel resembles the dialogues in Plato's *Republic*. A statement is made, followed by a response and then a response to the response, followed by another statement. And so on.

And so questions about what salvation means in the context of the characters in *Women Talking* and what forgiveness mean in the context of the actual Bolivian horrors are relevant questions in every context where abuse happens and where Christians try to be Christian.

JIM SUDERMAN, WINNIPEG

### ✉ Seniors ride a wave of social concern

We have been members of Erb Street Mennonite Church (Waterloo, Ont.) since the late 1970s. Over the years, peace and justice concerns have formed much of who we are.

Over time, it seems that societies have been caught in waves, or generations, of concern and action around social issues:

- **The civil rights** and the anti-war movement in the 1960s.
- **Environmental concerns**, birthed by Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, and the feminist movement, starting in the 1960s.
- **Opposition to nuclear weapons** and nuclear power in the 1970s.
- **Voices protesting human rights injustices** among North American Indigenous peoples and Latin Americans in the 1970s and 1980s.
- **The anti-apartheid movement** in the 1970s and 1980s.
- **Support for Palestinians** since forever.

Thankfully, the churches have been active most of the time.

In between some of these waves there have been lulls. I believe we are at the tail end of a lull, and that the next big wave is beginning to grow, starting with Greta Thunberg, a 16-year-old Swedish student, followed by high school students in dozens of cities, and the Extinction Rebellion activists in London, who all are protesting against inadequate preparations being made to prevent worst-case climate change scenarios.

As seniors who are responsible for part of the environmental mess and the dangers and destruction caused by climate change, receiving a tax credit or carbon tax rebate doesn't feel right to us. While realizing we need to do more, we will, on behalf of

future generations, donate our \$231 rebate to a non-profit organization that is fighting climate change. Join us.

DOROTHY AND RICHARD MACBRIDE,  
WATERLOO, ONT.

### ✉ What are your back-up plans?

**A long cold February—often below -30C—had me wondering again how we'd do in such weather if the power was off for weeks, like after the big ice storm in the east 20 years ago. Not well, I concluded.**

A strong case can be made for every home having a wood stove option. Generators are great but can break down or run out of fuel, and more might not be available.

Most people also don't have first-aid kits and other things in their cars. Homes, too, often lack emergency supplies and equipment, and most of us lack basic emergency know-how.

Preparing for emergencies means we can better and more quickly help ourselves, our families and others before 911 personnel arrive, and in power

outages and many other events we're simply on our own all the way. Better to be a Good Samaritan, if possible, than another person needing help.

Modern technology helps us immensely, but it also lulls us into over-reliance, ignorance and complacency. It seems that, in decades past, many people knew more about how to deal with various problems and crises. Farms, homes and people were more self-reliant, it seems. Power grids, phone networks, water on tap, furnaces, rescue services and many other things are wonderful, but what are our back-up plans?

The world is increasingly heading into troubled times in terms of weather, economics and other things. Short and long emergencies will grow in frequency, severity and duration.

If it was always a good idea to prep, now it makes even more sense. Fear of what might come doesn't help, but accepting reality and acting appropriately, does. The more we're prepared to do something about this or that problem, the more peace of mind we have. Joined with faith, it's an unbeatable combination.

HOWARD BOLDT, OSLER, SASK.

## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Bowman**—Addison Kate (b. April 5, 2019), to Jeremy and Christina Bowman, Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.

**Driedger**—Clémentine Marie (b. April 3, 2019), to Karen Leis and Joel Driedger, Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Foster**—Amelia Mary (b. March 30, 2019), to Jeff and Katie Foster, Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.

**Neufeld**—Hunter Bri (b. April 17, 2019), to Jason and Brianna Neufeld, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Siemens**—Fiona Faye (b. April 20, 2019), to Shawn and Stacie Siemens, Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Steiner-Koop**—Hugo Tilman (b. Feb. 13, 2019), to Rebecca Steiner and Pierre-Joël Koop, Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

### Baptisms

**Angalina Deng**—First Mennonite, Edmonton, Feb. 10, 2019.

**Meredith Reddy, Rachel Reid**—Hamilton Mennonite, Ont., March 3, 2019.

### Deaths

**Enns**—Peter, 92 (b. Jan. 11, 1927; d. March 9, 2019), Charleswood Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Epp**—Peter Henry, 89 (b. March 5, 1930; d. April 11, 2019), North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

**Heinrichs**—Frances, 93 (b. Aug. 27, 1925; d. March 27, 2019), First Mennonite, Calgary.

**Hiebert**—Henry Harry, 94 (b. Jan. 16, 1925; d. April 21, 2019), Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

**Hiebert**—Verna, 84 (b. Oct. 11, 1934; d. April 18, 2019), Fort Garry Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Hildebrand**—Jake, 78 (b. June 10, 1940; d. April 23, 2019), Morden Mennonite, Man.

**Kehler**—Justina (Jessie) (nee Neufeld), 88 (b. July 7, 1920; d. March 9, 2019), Charleswood Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Lehn**—Armin, 92 (d. April 19, 2019), Faith Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

**Sawatzky**—Victoria, 51 (b. Oct. 25, 1967; d. April 12, 2019), Fort Garry Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Tiessen**—Martha (Rempel), 94 (b. March 20, 1925; d. April 17, 2019), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

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## FROM OUR LEADERS

## Walking together

Andrea Enns-Gooding

This year, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan has been “deepening our walk with one another” as part of a three-year initiative to call us to deeper life with Christ, ourselves and our neighbours.

In a report prepared by the regional church’s reference group, there is a quote by Frederick Buechner: “The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”

So what is our deep gladness as MC Saskatchewan? At the recent national mission consultation in Calgary, a group of us from Saskatchewan identified that hospitality could be our gift from the Holy Spirit. We genuinely love to be together. In our work projects, our fundraising efforts together, and anything else we do, we find wholeness and a deeper understanding of Christ because we have done these tasks together.

This is a love story, people. As a parent, there is a moment when your child stands before you after having breathed out those weighty words, “Mom/Dad, I’ve got something to show

you.” He dips his head down, not to check on what mysterious treasure is emerging from a curiously soggy jean pocket, but to check his own heart for the courage to bring forward that “treasure.” This is the vulnerability that I hope we share with one another in our lives together as believers.

This call to deepen our walk with one another calls for the kind of courage we may not possess in and of ourselves. Deepening my walk with a brother or sister who may rub me the wrong way requires a momentous amount of vulnerability. But, because we know that we have a place in Christ (Romans 8:15), and that we are loved (I John 3:1), commissioned (Matthew 28:18-20), and blessed with the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17), we have all we need and are uniquely equipped to deepen relationships with our brothers and sisters.

In helping our neighbours, we are able to activate that great Mennonite superpower of service. Get out and do! Go forth and serve! Carry out acts and live lives full of social justice. These are all good things.

We can operate in our heads more easily here, and that is safe. But it is that place where our deep gift of hospitality to welcome the other and the world’s deep need for a place to belong with purpose and meaning can intersect and make a space for God’s presence here on Earth.

This is the place where vulnerability and love—that kind of love that calls us to take our gifts out of the soggy pockets of our lives—begin to allow for God to rule and reign in us. We sit in our meetings, Bible studies and coffee times, and hope against hope that we will learn to love each other a little more deeply. This is not just the work of MC Saskatchewan, it is the work of all of us who need to find our people and our place in God’s kingdom.

This is our love story. We want to live with transparent hope and incandescent grace, making way for the intersection of God’s great gift of hospitality to us and the deep need of the people around us to encounter true acceptance. Accepted for hidden treasures and soggy-jean lives, we welcome all. ❧



*Andrea Enns-Gooding is pastor of Zoar Mennonite Church, Waldheim, and a member of the MC Saskatchewan Council.*

## A moment from yesterday



Summer is a time when many set aside time to explore. Pictured are five men on their motorcycles on Railway Street in Morden, Man., in 1913. From left to right on the motorcycles are: Isaac G. Brown, George G. Brown, Jacob E. Dyck, John J. Braun, and an unknown rider. New and familiar places are visited, old friends get reacquainted and new memories and relationships are made. Have you ever used the *Mennonite Your Way Directory* in your travels? It is “[a] listing of over 1,700 hosts who offer lodging in their homes in over 70 countries.”

Text: Conrad Stoesz

Photo: Mennonite Heritage Archives



archives.mhsc.ca

## IN THE IMAGE

## In court with 'Clifford'

Ed Olfert

Recently, I attended a provincial court session. A released offender friend, "Clifford" (a pseudonym), had messed up rather significantly. It wasn't a violent offence, but it was the third breach of his conditions. It was a reasonable assumption that the system would not see Clifford's actions as "cute."

It had been a while. The business part of the courtroom was as I had remembered, or had imagined. New to me was a structure that looked for all the world like a dated china cabinet, complete with tall glass frontage. Except that this china cabinet ran the length of the court area, about 10 metres. It took a moment to realize that this is the best system we can conjure for herding incarcerated people in and out, while keeping them physically separate from the court officials and staff. If an offender wished a conversation with his lawyer, both had to bend over indecorously to where there were small holes in the china-cabinet glass.

All those who appeared in the china-cabinet windows throughout the morning sessions looked incredibly broken. Although the court proceedings showed little enthusiasm for providing audio to the gathered visitors, the words "drugs" and "alcohol" were repeated often

enough to be recognizable.

A break in the morning had five of us—all with connections to Clifford—in a circle. Two of us were volunteer supports for Clifford, one was a Restorative Justice staff person, and two others were Clifford's stepfather and sister. I had not met them before. As we chatted, a lawyer who was passing heard Clifford's name. "Oh, you're here for Clifford? So am I. Let's go talk in the hall!"

I assume the lawyer was a legal-aid appointee. She asked us what we could tell her that would be useful information for the court to hear.

Clifford's sister, "Sharon" (a pseudonym) spoke up passionately. She wanted the court to know more about Clifford's formational years: the abuse, the addictions around him in the family home, the fact that no one had ever offered solutions or programs beyond incarceration. Sharon was angry, and it was clear that her passion was rooted in her concern for her younger brother. In her words, beyond the passion and desperation, I sensed a deep wisdom that grew out of her determination to improve the lot of anyone who qualified as family. When we asked her how we, as volunteers, could usefully support Clifford, her suggestions were striking. Sharon knew her stuff.

We returned to the courtroom, and when Clifford's case was finally called up, the defence lawyer leaned into her role with gusto. When challenged by the prosecutor or the judge, she spoke with determination. More astounding, I could actually hear her words.

The ruling came back as favourable as could be hoped for. Sharon communicated with Clifford through the china-cabinet glass until he was led away. As we moved out of the room, she shook hands with the lawyer, thanked her and acknowledged that it had gone pretty well. Clifford would serve some months in provincial jail but would be offered a program that would allow him to be released daily to his roofing job in the city.

I moved to Sharon, suggested that perhaps she should consider a role as a counsellor. She laughed, and told me that she was fully focussed on being a *kokum* (a Cree word for grandmother) for her grandchildren.

In a bleak setting, in a confusing interpretation of justice, I was given a glimpse of compassion, determination and hope. It was unplanned, unexpected. Holy stuff usually comes that way. ❧



*Ed Olfert (p2ptheo @sasktel.net) ministers, and is ministered to, in Saskatchewan.*

## Et cetera

## Global giving

**The Global Church Sharing Fund is administered by the Deacons Commission of Mennonite World Conference. The Sharing Fund supported three projects in 2017 and 10 projects in 2018. One of those projects was a new building for the Antakiya Mennonite Church in Raipur, India, dedicated on Dec. 14, 2018.**

Source: *Courier* magazine, April 2019, page 18, and MWC website: "A celebration of family in India."  
Photo: Mennonite World Conference



**Henk Stenvers, secretary of the Deacons Commission, greets local Mennonites in India in December 2018.**

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

# The gift of ecumenism

Story and Photo by Mark Diller Harder

In January I returned to St. Jacobs (Ont.) Mennonite Church after a wonderfully spacious and rich four-month sabbatical filled with so many good things. The highlight was the trip my wife Rachel and I took to Europe.

I eagerly anticipated some of the Anabaptist sites and history we would encounter, especially in Switzerland, one of the birthplaces of Anabaptism. It was powerful to stand on the banks of the Limmat River in Zurich and read the plaque about Felix Manz, the first Anabaptist martyr by drowning. We saw the home of Conrad Grebel and toured the Grossmünster Church, where they debated Ulrich Zwingli and the Reformers.



*Visitors walking the labyrinth in the Chartres Cathedral, France.*

We saw the inside of the prison walls and shackles at Trachselwald Castle in the Emmental Valley, and worshipped in Swiss German at the oldest existing Mennonite church in the world—Langnau Emmental. These were core identity experiences.

What I had not anticipated as much were the many rich ecumenical encounters, particularly in Catholic settings. I suspect, as Mennonites, we subconsciously carry an inner suspicion of other Christian expressions even as we borrow and share so much in common.

We had intentionally planned to visit Chartres Cathedral but had not real-

ized, or remembered, that in the heart of every old city there would be a grand ancient Gothic cathedral built over the centuries. They were magnificent, with their architecture, stained-glass windows, paintings and stone work, and their stunning acoustics and huge organs. It is overwhelming to stand and look up. I fell in love with this sacred architectural expression, in such contrast to our simple Mennonite worship spaces. But in my mind, I had relegated them to historical buildings and entered them as a tourist, snapping photos and taking in their grandeur. Two cathedrals changed that for me.

We first entered Chartres Cathedral at night and I was immediately struck by the spiritual warmth of the well-weathered stones under our feet, the open spaciousness above us and the glowing, vibrant stained-glass windows. Then we heard the singing: a mass was in progress, and prayers and songs were being lifted up to God. We returned the next morning in time to take in a full mass in the small lower crypt, a daily discipline of the faithful.

A week later, daughter Lorena and I spent an hour touring and taking photos in the Rouen Cathedral, with the highest spire in France. Just before 5 p.m., we were about to leave when the bells starting ringing and people started streaming in. We stayed and found ourselves in the middle of the All Saints Day worship service. There were young and old, and about 20 priests in white who processed in. The big pipe organ began and soon the small organ and a little singing group led the congregational singing. The priest gave a timely

and contemporary homily in French, directed primarily at the young adults. This historic building was suddenly a vibrant present-day worshipping community and we were no longer tourists. These cathedrals have life!

My last week in Europe was spent in the Taizé community in south-central France. The vision of Protestant founder Brother Roger in the 1950s was for an ecumenical community of Catholic, multiple Protestant denominations and occasional Orthodox brothers worshipping and living a common life together. That spirit has led to thousands of young adults (religious and non-religious) coming most weeks from around Europe and the world, seeking the plain lifestyle, daily Bible studies and group conversations, and the simple yet profound prayers, silence and Taizé songs three times a day.

On Thursday night, three North American guests (myself and a pastor couple from the United States) met with Canadian Brother Emile. He shared deeply and honestly about the joys and challenges of such a diverse community of brothers trying to live into this ecumenical vision.

On my last morning, several new Catholic young adult friends asked if I would accompany them to the early Catholic full mass in the smaller crypt. I had become friends with a German Catholic priest, also on sabbatical. I asked him if it would be okay for me, a Mennonite, to take the Eucharist. His response was simply: “Do you believe in Jesus?” and I joyfully participated in this act of worship.

I left Europe with a deep appreciation of the breadth, diversity and gifts of the larger church of God. I claim both my own Anabaptist heritage and faith, and yet I can place it alongside a vibrant, living faith shared by Christians around the world in so many expressions. ❧

## REFLECTION AT THE CLOSE OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES SOLIDARITY TEAM

Harvesting *manoomin* at 'Shooniversity'

By Chuck Wright  
Christian Peacemakers Team

This last summer (2018), my teammate Kathy Moorhead Thiessen and I travelled to Grassy Narrows in northwestern Ontario with Rizwan Shoukat, a former delegate and Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) supporter, to learn about and experience the process of harvesting wild rice (*manoomin*). Drenched after a two-hour boat ride across the choppy waters of Grassy Narrows Lake, we pulled onto the beach to set up camp for harvesting *manoomin* with Andrew "Shoon" Keewatin, a long-time friend of CPT.

Shoon explained to us that, until late in the 1980s, this peninsula jutting into Shoe Lake was the location his family would travel to in order to harvest *manoomin* each year. About a dozen tents would be set up at this site for several days of harvest. The scattered stalks of *manoomin* along the shoreline recall the intergenerational encampments on the beach.

Using our hands and two short pieces of wood, we picked and batted the ripe grain heads into the bottom of our canoes. Shoon remembers how the older men would sing powwow songs to the rice as they collected it into their canoes. When one of us asked why, he responded

simply, "To express gratitude."

Some years ago, industrial harvesters began coming into the area and destroying the *manoomin* fields. Airboats with large scoopers would blaze through the fields, often harvesting the rice when the plants were too young. This practice ended when elders in Grassy Narrows and Wabaseemoong declared that *manoomin* in their territories could only be harvested using traditional methods.

According to Shoon, few people in Grassy Narrows harvest wild rice anymore. While he grew up with the harvest, today's young people in Grassy Narrows have not. However, only a few days later, neighbouring Wabaseemoong First Nation held an annual wild-rice camp, in which the community had pooled its resources to teach and maintain this tradition. Shoon said that he would like to see the Grassy Narrows leadership initiate something similar.

While sitting around the campfire, one of us asked Shoon if he thought the government was now respecting harvesting, hunting, and fishing rights on Grassy Narrows traditional territory. He pointed to a Supreme Court ruling he was part of (Grassy Narrows First Nation vs. Ontario, 2014) and said, "Ever since the

court case . . . they've been sure to cross their t's and dot their i's."

We remembered the role CPT played in this struggle for Grassy Narrows' sovereignty. CPT's relationship with Grassy Narrows was forged just before their historic logging blockade began in December 2002. "CPT was really helpful, especially with those loggers," Shoon recalled. "As soon as [the loggers] saw someone else with a camera, you could see an immediate change in their face."

After a day of harvesting and a couple of days of roasting and "dancing" on the rice, we did not have a lot to show for it. However, it has caused us as a team to develop a new appreciation for this Anishinaabe cultural tradition, and to reflect on its richness and fragility, as well as the role solidarity can play in enabling traditional practices to continue in our colonial context. ❧

*Originally appeared in the January-March 2019 issue of the Christian Peacemaker Teams newsletter. Reprinted with permission. CPT closed the Indigenous Peoples Solidarity program on March 31 due to a lack of funding, although two delegations will make trips to Grassy Narrows this summer.*



INDIGENOUS PEOPLES SOLIDARITY TEAM PHOTO

Andrew 'Shoon' Keewatin, a friend of CPT, and Rizwan Shoukat, a former delegate and Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) supporter, harvest *manoomin* (wild rice) at Grassy Narrows in northwestern Ontario last year.

# Two centuries of worship, a century of service

*Rainham Mennonite Church continues to meet in God's name despite dwindling numbers*

By Maria H. Klassen  
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

For more than a century, the women of Rainham Mennonite Church—a tiny congregation just off of Highway 3 near the north shore of Lake Erie in southwestern Ontario—have continued a sewing circle, one that is now augmented by women from the community. The group still quilts regularly during the fall and winter.

But the congregation, just a few kilometres from the village of Selkirk, dates back much further than that; it has been meeting continuously for 225 years.

In 1792, Jacob Hoover came to Ontario from Pennsylvania and purchased a thousand hectares of land along the north shore of Lake Erie. The following year, his family, which included several sons and their families, moved to the area. A house church was started shortly after.

This area was very sparsely settled until 1816, at which time more families moved to the area from Vineland and Niagara. Common family names included Shank, Swartz, Strickler, Sherk, Werner, Miller and Byler.

An 1836 deed granted a half-hectare of this land to the Mennonite Society (specifically Benjamin Hoover, Henry Miller and John Fry) for a church and a cemetery.

Rainham Mennonite Church, named after the township it is located in, was the only church in the area, with Michael Shank listed as the minister. The original church meetinghouse was destroyed by fire, and the current building was built close by on land donated in 1870.

Changes to the church building took place over the years to make it still usable today. There are no longer separate entrances for men and women; two wood stoves have been replaced by a furnace; and gas lights were installed in

1908, followed by electric lights in 1935. There are no longer horse sheds on the property. A basement was added, as well as a new main entrance and a basement kitchen. New windows, a new roof and new siding followed. At one time there was a school next door.

Revival meetings were held in the early years. Sunday school was first organized in 1883, the women's first sewing circle started in 1918, and summer Bible school began in 1936. The church sponsored Mennonites coming from Russia from 1924 to 1926, and refugees from southeast Asia in 1980.

Worship services continue at the church every Sunday morning.

Descendants from the first settlers—Hoovers, Yagers, Werners and Dawsons—are still active in the church. In 1999, when Dunnville Mennonite Church closed its doors permanently, several families joined the Rainham congregation.

In past years, joint services were also held with Cheapside Brethren in Christ Church, but this church has also closed.

Because of its current size, Rainham Mennonite hasn't had a full-time minister since 2014, relying on interim ministers and guest speakers for the last five years. These have included John Veensstra from the Christian Reformed Church in the area, and Mennonites Doug Amstutz and Max Kennel.

Last year, a sermon series walked congregants through every book of the Bible. This year, the sermon series is looking at how great works of western literature—by Augustine, Nietzsche, Dante and Annie Dillard's *Holy the Firm*—can help them along their walk of faith. Congregants stay after the service to enjoy coffee and discussion time.



RAINHAM MENNONITE CHURCH FILE PHOTO

**Rainham Mennonite Church has been worshipping for more than two centuries.**

In fact, the appeal of the church continues to be the warm family atmosphere among the congregation. ☞

## News brief

### Banquet raises \$5,300 for *Canadian Mennonite*

Around 70 people gathered to show their support for *Canadian Mennonite* at its 48th annual fundraising banquet, held this year in Steinbach, Man., on April 6. After a dinner of farmer's sausage and *vereneki*, and a performance by Accent, a women's vocal ensemble, Elmer Hildebrand, CEO of Golden West Broadcasting and a CM board member, conducted a short interview with Andrew Unger, writer of popular satire website, The Daily Bonnet. Hildebrand announced that CM is financially stable and headed in a good direction. Tobi Thiessen, publisher, spoke about CM's importance and its reach outside of Mennonite circles. Prominent Mennonites like writer Miriam Toews and former cabinet minister Jane Philpott have been making headlines lately, and many people have been turning to CM as a resource for these topics, she said. "When the general public wants to know something about Mennonites, they will often end up on our website." "These events are valuable because they give the board and staff an opportunity to get to know people in their local communities," Thiessen said. "We are deeply grateful for the additional financial support that readers provide when they attend these events." The event raised \$5,300 for CM.

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

# 'It's all worship'

*MC Eastern Canada delegates celebrate God at work amidst new structures and sobering financial realities*

By Janet Bauman  
Eastern Canada Correspondent  
BADEN, ONT.

Representatives of 107 congregations from Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick gathered at Steinmann Mennonite Church for Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's annual church gathering on April 26 and 27, framed around the theme of "Deepening our relationship with God."

There were opportunities to sing and pray, eat and socialize, listen and share, reflect, discern and make decisions. According to David Martin, the regional church's executive minister, "It's all worship," as delegates look for and name God's mission and vision in all the church does.

April Yamasaki, writer and pastor from British Columbia, used Psalm 27 to explore what a deeper relationship with God might look like. Noting the direct language in the psalm, she encouraged people to come to God just as they are in days of trouble as well as when things are going well. It is not enough to talk about God, like in the first six verses of the psalm, but it is also important to dialogue with God, like in the remaining verses. The psalm leaves room for lamenting and waiting for God's timing, but in the end it moves to a place of trust in God.

Worship leaders Mike Erb and Anneli Loepf Thiessen, part of the team developing *Voices Together*, a new collection of songs and worship resources for Mennonite churches, led singing from this collection, with support from an ensemble of musicians.

MC Eastern Canada staff and volunteers celebrated being church together and the many ways God is at work among and through them.

Two congregations were welcomed into full membership in MC Eastern Canada:

- **Refuge de Paix**, Sherbrooke, Que., a Spanish-speaking congregation ministering to Hispanic refugees.
- **Markham Christian Worship Centre**, Markham, Ont., a Tamil-speaking congregation with roots in Sri Lanka, that shares space with two other Mennonite churches.

Gratitude and prayers of blessing were offered to Brian Bauman, MC Eastern Canada's mission minister for 16 years, who plans to retire in December. Bauman helped to sharpen mission priorities of making disciples, planting churches, welcoming new Canadian churches and working alongside marginalized communities. He encouraged calling leaders out of these communities and shifting toward a perspective of "mission with" instead of "mission to."

Norm Dyck was introduced and blessed as the new mission minister. His passion and experience in disciple-making and cross-cultural relationships were highlighted. Currently serving as mission engagement minister with the regional church, Dyck called for "truly reciprocal relationships," recognizing that "God is already present and active in communities, neighbourhoods and street corners."

## Church business and reports

This is the first full year of the restructured relationship between the five regional church bodies and MC Canada, with emphasis on the local congregation as the foundational body for worship, nurture and mission. Living into the new structure is still a work-in-progress, but Henry Paetkau, interim executive minister of MC Canada, cited improved communications and stronger regional



CM PHOTOS BY D. MICHAEL HOSTETLER

**Markham Christian Worship Centre, Markham, Ont., a Tamil-speaking congregation with roots in Sri Lanka (PHOTO ABOVE) and Refuge de Paix, Sherbrooke, Que., a Spanish-speaking congregation ministering to Hispanic refugees (PHOTO BELOW) are welcomed into full membership in MC Eastern Canada by MC Eastern Canada moderator Arli Klassen, left, and Henry Paetkau, right, MC Canada interim executive minister.**



churches as early benefits.

Jason Martin, director of International Witness for MC Canada, reassured delegates that International Witness work continues despite funding changes. He clarified that at least half comes through "relational funding" generated by Witness Support Teams that form relationships with workers, generate financial support from local churches, and offer advocacy and communication links. The remainder comes from MC Canada. He also showed a video introducing several workers and what they do.

Sean East, MC Eastern Canada's financial manager, noted that balancing the books for last year meant drawing on revenues from special funds, something that won't be possible in the future, as those funds will be depleted. He presented a \$2.3 million budget for the coming year, explaining that due to a \$100,000 decline in undesignated contributions from churches to the operations of the regional church last year—part of a half-million-dollar decline in the past decade—some cuts will be made this year to external

partners, like camps and schools, and some administrative staff time. Delegates approved the proposed budget.

Arli Klassen, MC Eastern Canada's moderator, led delegates through the process of approving an updated set of

bylaws to reflect new legal requirements and clarity around membership. ✎

## MC Eastern Canada leaders share their passions for peace, justice, youth ministry

BY JANET BAUMAN

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
BADEN, ONT.

**A**t Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's church gathering on April 26 and 27, delegates heard reports from staff and volunteers passionate about recent initiatives:

- **Attendees heard a report** from representatives of the newly formed Truth and Reconciliation Coordinating Group. At last year's gathering, attendance at an exploratory meeting demonstrated that many people in MC Eastern Canada want to respond to the 94 calls to action

issued by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). As a result, four regional TRC working groups were formed to connect with their Indigenous neighbours in a variety of ways. Inspired by Jesus, coordinating group representatives called people to "offer our loaves and fishes" to counteract denial, shame and powerlessness in the face of a huge challenge.

- **Representatives from the Palestine/Israel Working Group** reported on how it has worked at education and advocacy by hosting lectures and training in a land exercise similar to the Kairos blanket exercise used in education about Indigenous history in Canada. The group sees the church as an heir to the original mission of God, through the Israelites, to be a blessing to all the people of the Earth, including the Palestinians.

- **Marilyn Rudy-Froese**, church

leadership minister, and Jean Lehn Epp shared an update on the discernment process begun around youth ministry after calls for support in this area. Lehn Epp, hired a year ago as interim coordinator of youth ministry resources, hosted a one-day consultation on April 6, to address the challenges of inviting youth into active church participation. They concluded that "programs are not enough," and developed a "provocative proposition" for this important work going forward: "Investing in intentional, unconditional relationships with youth, walking with them towards a fearless faith in Christ Jesus."

Lehn Epp's contract was extended for another year, in part to lead a youth ministry "dream team" in a year of discernment and living into what this proposition means. Lehn Epp said, "We lit a fire, and we won't let it go out." ✎

# From Colombia to Kitchener

*MWC general secretary relocates to Canada*

Mennonite World Conference

**G**eneral secretary César García and executive assistant Sandra Báez Rojas of Mennonite World Conference (MWC) relocated to Ontario in the dead of winter to work out of the Kitchener office.

"We acknowledge that wherever the general secretary is located, there are advantages and disadvantages," says MWC president J. Nelson Kraybill. "With this move, there is a loss of the symbolism of our general secretary coming from and living in the Global South. On balance, however, the greater ease of global travel from a North



PHOTO BY WILHELM UNGER

**César García, second from left, and other Mennonite World Conference leaders receive thanks from the Kenya Mennonite Church, which hosted General Council meetings in Limuru, Kenya.**

American hub makes the job more sustainable."

The Bogotá office, in collaboration with

Mennonite Central Committee, will remain in place for Anna Sorgius, chief administrative officer; Nelson Martinez, administrative assistant; and Pablo Stucky, Andean region regional representative. Chief communications officer Kristina Toews also moved to Canada in February, to work out of a home office in Abbotsford, B.C.

Living close to Toronto, with its busy international airport, will improve the general secretary's availability to the whole Mennonite communion. ✎

# MC Eastern Canada apologizes for causing pain to abuse survivors

Canadian Mennonite

**M**ennonite Church Eastern Canada recently offered a public apology acknowledging missteps in how it handled a case of reported sexual misconduct that dates back more than 30 years.

In the mid-1990s, the regional church began investigating complaints against Dalton Jantzi, an ordained minister, concerning allegations of misconduct dating back to 1981. The complaints were investigated and deemed legitimate by MC Eastern Canada, leading to a probation period and an accountability structure set up for Jantzi, who admitted responsibility.

MC Eastern Canada's Leadership Commission put ongoing limitations on his ministry, which Jantzi contested. In October 2001, the regional church terminated his ministerial credentials. (*To read previous reports on this case, visit [canadianmennonite.org/jantzi-termination](http://canadianmennonite.org/jantzi-termination).)*

An MC Eastern Canada news release, issued March 27, states:



"In November 2018, a survivor of sexual misconduct perpetrated in the 1980s by formerly ordained MC Eastern Canada minister Dalton Jantzi contacted Marilyn Rudy-Froese, MC Eastern Canada church leadership minister. Along with a volunteer from Mennonite Abuse Prevention List (MAP), they requested clarification regarding the status of Jantzi's ministerial credential and his engagement in ministry.

"Upon receiving these concerns, MC Eastern Canada conducted a thorough review of past disciplinary actions related to Jantzi. This review concluded that MC Eastern Canada failed to communicate adequately to the entire constituency the termination of Jantzi's ministerial cre-

dential on Oct. 12, 2001. Further, it came to our attention that a listing of ordination anniversaries in the Discernment Documents for the 2015 annual delegate meeting incorrectly included Jantzi. We regret that this error went unnoticed."

A correction was included in MC Eastern Canada's 2019 annual report and Rudy-Froese issued a verbal apology at the regional church's annual gathering on April 27.

The news release continues: "We recognize that these failures caused further pain to those hurt by Jantzi's sexual misconduct, and confusion within the broader church regarding Jantzi's credential.

"MC Eastern Canada apologizes for these failures and for the further pain they have caused. In the spirit of transparency, a summary overview of actions taken in regard to Jantzi's credential is available for review from MC Eastern Canada.

"The courage of victims who come forward to tell their stories helps us as a church to learn and move forward in addressing clergy sexual misconduct and to facilitate healing and recovery. We are committed to learning from past mistakes, and finding a just and redemptive path forward.

"We are committed to investigate any allegation of ministerial misconduct immediately, will transparently report to our constituency any disciplinary actions and sanctions regarding ministerial misconduct, and will proactively promote awareness and educational initiatives, so that persons of all ages can safely participate in the activities of our faith communities."

Both Jantzi and the survivor were contacted but neither wished to comment on the apology.

While no longer serving in an official ministerial position, Jantzi has been a long-time participant in the life of Dan-

forth Mennonite Church, in Toronto, and has served as a volunteer in several community organizations.

In a statement on behalf of the Danforth Mennonite Church Council, Pastor Tim Reimer wrote: "When Dalton and Carol began attending in 1995, Danforth put in place its own accountability committee, in addition to the reporting structures put in place by MC Eastern Canada. For the first five years, Dalton took part in no church activities except attending Sunday worship. Danforth's accountability committee met for a few years after this, and the pastor and caring team stayed in contact with him beyond this. As trust grew, and relationships developed, the congregation gradually invited him to use his gifts in more and more contexts. . . .

"We would therefore offer as fuller context to MC Eastern Canada's statement, the acknowledgement of Dalton's compliance with stipulations, and Danforth's decades-long journey of learning how to be both vigilant and rehabilitative."

However, MAP claims that "[f]urther serious details about his abuse, as well as additional victims, have been reported to the MAP List. Our understanding is that there were also uninvestigated complaints against Jantzi from the low-income housing unit where he worked. . . . We've heard he has now resigned from the board of one organization as part of the fallout from our post." (*See more at [bit.ly/2UVBi4c](http://bit.ly/2UVBi4c).)* %

*MC Eastern Canada urges survivors of clergy sexual misconduct to contact Marilyn Rudy-Froese to share their story or concern by phone toll-free at 1-855-476-2500, ext. 704, or by email to [mrudyfroese@mcec.ca](mailto:mrudyfroese@mcec.ca). For more information, see also "Reporting sexual misconduct by church leaders" at [bit.ly/2vySkuK](http://bit.ly/2vySkuK).*



# Finding the balance between grace and responsibility

*Saskatoon couple look back on first eight months of intentional community life*

By Donna Schulz

Saskatchewan Correspondent

It's been eight months since Thomas and Terri Lynn Friesen opened their Saskatoon home as The Vine and Table intentional community. For Terri Lynn, those eight months have been "an interesting season . . . of challenge and great joy."

The Friesens thought their house would be a great home for students, but, because they directed their outreach mainly toward their peers, all four of the couple's new housemates are working at jobs or careers.

Thomas, who works as a spiritual director, and Terri Lynn, who is on maternity leave from her job as pastor of faith and community at Osler Mennonite Church, live in a self-contained apartment on the second floor of their century-old home. Another married couple occupies the main-floor bedroom and two single housemates have rooms on the third floor.

"The table is at the centre of things because eating is central to what we do," says Terri Lynn. "We eat together five nights a week." Housemates share cooking responsibilities, with each one taking a weekly turn at meal preparation.

Food has the potential to be a source of conflict. "We have very different experiences of food ethics," Terri Lynn says. "Some have spent a lot of time thinking about food, others just really love bananas."

In an effort to ethically source as much of their food as possible, The Vine and Table has a large backyard garden that supplies vegetables for their table in summer and fall. They purchase root vegetables in bulk at the nearby farmers market, and they buy meat from a local farmer.

Household chores can also potentially be a source of conflict. One person may spend an hour-and-a-half cleaning the bathroom, while another does the job in 10 minutes. To ensure the house is cleaned to a certain standard, the Friesens introduced chore cards detailing what needs to be cleaned in each area of the

cooking and cleaning schedules for the coming week, to talk about what needs fixing in the house, and to update one another about guests who may be joining them for meals or overnight. It's also a time to pray together. "We pray for each other and for the world," says Terri Lynn.

Everyone in their household has lived in community before. "It's not an expectation, but it helps," she says, adding, "The experience of [having lived in] previous community house situations is really valuable in terms of knowing how to live vulnerably and deeply in community with people."

For Terri Lynn, being pregnant has added to the challenges of their first year at The Vine and Table. The couple's first child is due this month. Although she felt unwell for much of her first trimester, she says that she appreciated "just receiving grace from housemates.

. . . Their excitement carried me through when I wasn't very excited."

One of the things she feared about becoming a parent was being isolated. "That will not be a reality with welcoming this little person into the world," she says. Although becoming a mother is making her think about her identity, she says, "Any time our identity is challenged is an opportunity to return to our identity in Christ."

Terri Lynn says she is grateful for the experience of the past eight months. She looks forward to growing the community in the future, both as more housemates are added to The Vine and Table, and as housemates move away and they maintain relationships with those who used to live with them. "It's a real gift to be able to share life in this way," she says. ❧



PHOTO COURTESY OF TERRI LYNN FRIESEN

**Friends and neighbours join residents at The Vine and Table for a birthday celebration.**

house.

Members are expected to have weekly chores done by Thursday's household meeting. "We're always trying to find a balance between grace and responsibility in terms of doing chores and getting them done on time," says Terri Lynn.

One experiment they have tried has been an "airing of mandatory grievances," says Terri Lynn. She describes it as "a safe place to mention pet peeves." These would likely include "the things we let go of in order to live graciously," she says. Being able to talk about them hopefully prevents minor irritations from developing into full-blown conflicts.

The Thursday meeting, or community night, gives housemates an opportunity to check in with one another, to plan

# Breaking through the screen

*Mennonite institutions discuss parenting in the digital age*

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe  
Manitoba Correspondent  
WINNIPEG

**S**creens. They are what many people look at to check the time, talk to their friends, prepare for meetings and unwind at the end of the day. But it's not just those who can buy devices for themselves who are using them. Children are now figuring out how to work phones and tablets before they can even walk or talk.

Growing up is a whole new game for children today, and it's what is behind those screens that parents need to know about. Several Mennonite institutions in Winnipeg have made it their mission to do just this.

The Bedson campus of Winnipeg Mennonite Elementary and Middle Schools (WMEMS) hosted an event entitled "Raising children in the digital world" on Feb. 21. School psychologist Sarah Juchnowski and Constable Orlando Buduhan, a Winnipeg Police community relations officer, talked about the impact of screen time on children's mental health and safety. Around 90 parents gathered to learn about the risks of technology and what they can do to keep their children safe.

David Stoesz, principal of WMEMS Bedson, said he hears of children whose parents don't let them go to the park or ride their bikes with their friends because they're afraid of what could happen. "We have fears of the dangers our kids can get into outside and we don't fear enough the things that are right in front of us," he said. "The kind of dangers in the backyard are minimal compared to the dangers kids face inside with these devices."

He said the school wanted to host the event to engage parents with relevant issues that are affecting their children's lives.

Students at WMEMS Bedson already

start using computers in Kindergarten. The older grades have digital arts classes as part of an enrichment program, and students learn how to design, code and use different devices and programs. Starting in Grade 6, students can bring their own tablets or smartphones to school and are encouraged to use them for certain activities.

And there's a reason for this. Digital media and technology allow students to learn in new ways, collaborate on projects, express themselves and their creativity, and connect with their friends.

But digital media must be used responsibly. The school has a policy that the use of personal devices is only allowed under the direction of a teacher and is off-limits during lunchtime and recess. "We want kids to spend their lunch face-to-face," Stoesz said.

And with good reason. Despite the many contributions technology makes, it also has negative effects on safety and mental health, according to Dr. Jean Twenge, whose 2018 study of eighth, 10th and 12th graders in the United States found that less screen time correlated with higher happiness levels. The more hours of screen time per week, the lower the individual's happiness and psychological well-being.

Digital devices often shorten young people's time spent sleeping, exercising and going outside. They can expose them to strangers and suspicious content, but they can also increase anxiety and mental-health issues.

This is where Recovery of Hope (RoH) speaks into the issue. RoH, a program of the Mennonite mental health and wellness organization Eden Health Care Services, provides counselling and education



PHOTO BY DAVID STOESZ

**WMEMS Bedson students in grades 6 to 8 participate in a coding club, where they learn to write code for building websites.**

for individuals and families in Manitoba.

It organized an event on April 11, also entitled "Raising children in the digital world," held at École Charleswood School in Winnipeg. More than 300 people gathered to listen to a presentation on the topic by Dr. Gordon Neufeld, a developmental psychologist and best-selling author based in Vancouver.

"Those [attendees] that spoke to me and my colleagues were very appreciative and grateful for the message, and quite inspired," said Terry Warburton, the clinical director of RoH who helped organize the event.

She said that one of Eden's goals as an organization is to provide resources to the community, including supporting parents in their relationships with their children. "Parents are concerned about their child's use of their devices and the things they're accessing online, and not sure what they should do [while] feeling a little bit helpless," she said.

Neufeld approaches everything in the context of what matters most: relationships. He teaches parents that the main reason children crave a digital connection is to bridge separation, so parents need to nurture a meaningful connection with their children now more than ever.

"Dr. Neufeld's message reminds us why this is happening, helps us make sense of what's going on in the child, and then finds ways to move into nurturing the relationship," Warburton said. "It's a very hopeful message, because it's always about relationships, and that it's never too late to start." ❧

## Q &amp; A

# What to expect at MC Canada's annual general meeting?

Katie Doke Sawatzky  
Mennonite Church Canada

## Q. What is the purpose of the delegate session at Gathering 2019?

A. Delegates will review and ratify Joint Council actions; receive and review reports from our programs—International Witness, Indigenous-Settler Relations and CommonWord—as well as the regional churches; and act on any recommendations coming from Joint Council or regional churches.

They will also review and assess progress in implementing the new MC Canada structure, elect executive officers of Joint Council, and confirm auditors.

## Q. Who are the delegates under the new structure?

A. Congregations no longer select or send delegates. Delegates are now appointed by the five regional churches. Six members of the board of directors of each regional church, five delegates appointed by the regional church, and additional delegates based on regional church membership (one for every thousand members) make up the delegates sent to MC Canada gatherings.

## Q. Is anything different under the new MC Canada structure?

A. In 2017, the regional churches covenanted together to constitute MC Canada to nurture a nationwide Anabaptist identity. It is now the five regional churches (MC British Columbia, MC Alberta, MC Saskatchewan, MC Manitoba and MC Eastern Canada) that make up MC Canada and collectively set the agenda and program for MC Canada. The annual general meeting will include reports from the regional churches on how this agenda is being carried forward locally, regionally, nationwide and globally.



## Q. What reports will be presented at this annual general meeting?

A. An update on implementation of the new MC Canada structure. Reports from MC Canada programs: International Witness, Indigenous-Settler Relations and CommonWord. Reports from regional churches. An update on the MC Canada communications strategy. A report on the inaugural MC Canada mission consultation, which took place in Calgary from March 29 to 31.

## Q. Are there key decisions that will be made?

A. MC Canada is still living into the new structure. No actions or recommendations have come from the regional churches. Approval of the finances and of the content and schedule of future gatherings are the decisions to be made at this time.

## Q. Are there other things to look forward to during this session?

A. The annual general meeting is scheduled for the morning of June 29. In the afternoon, Gathering 2019 officially kicks off with worship that will include a session with guest speaker Elaine Heath and the installation of Doug Klassen as executive minister of MC Canada. ✎

*Registration for Gathering 2019 is now open! Visit [ignitegathering2019.ca/registration](http://ignitegathering2019.ca/registration) for the registration guidelines and link.*



## News brief

### 'Trinitarian theology for a radical church'



TORONTO—"Our task this evening is to go in pursuit of a mystery and its implications for how we believe and how we live our lives." With these words John D. Rempel, ThD, began his lecture, "An impossible task: Trinitarian theology for a radical church?" at the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre on March 14. Rempel explored Trinitarian thinking from the fourth century to the 20th, noting the consistent challenges brought against it from "un-Trinitarian expressions of belief." Un-Trinitarian thinking, Rempel said, results in an account of the drama of the Lord's Supper that ultimately involves only one actor: humans. Rempel's most constructive claims were worked out through an account of four 20th-century thinkers, including John Howard Yoder and Jurgen Moltmann. While all were critical of the tradition, and thus "unruly Trinitarians," these four theologians nonetheless remained accountable to Trinitarian faith, Rempel said. By doing so, the four demonstrate that the doctrine of the Trinity, rather than being a form of antiquated and abstract metaphysics, is a "way of thinking [that] has shown itself able to hold together in a dynamic relationship, the Bible's witness to God's self-revelation, the creed as its symbol, and its reception across the ages." More than just a rich historical and theological analysis, Rempel's lecture was offered equally as admonition. Addressing the next generation, Rempel said: "Take the torch, those of you who are in the generation that is now taking over. Meet us at the centre-point of the gospel and then trace out faithful ways of thinking and living that speak out of and into your generation."

—TORONTO MENNONITE  
THEOLOGICAL CENTRE

## PEOPLE

# Join the (fashion) revolution

By Rachel Bergen  
Contributing Editor

**W**ho made my clothes? That's what the organizers of the globally observed Fashion Revolution Week want people to ask themselves the next time they put on an outfit or choose what clothing to buy.

Fashion Revolution began in response to the Rana Plaza building collapse in Bangladesh, which killed 1,138 people and injured another 2,500 in 2013. Since then, people from all over the world have called on brands to take action to improve working conditions for garment workers.

The advocacy group says these changes are slowly happening. More brands are being open about where their clothes are made, more manufacturers are making their factories safer, and more producers are being seen and heard.

But Fashion Revolution says there's still a lot of work to be done.

That's where people like Elise Epp and Anna-Marie Janzen come in. The pair were involved in the planning and execution of the first Winnipeg events to mark Fashion Revolution Week from April 22 to 28.

The week of advocacy began with a mend/make-in at a Winnipeg outlet mall on April 22, at which around 30 people embroidered, sewed, knitted, spun and mended in the middle of the mall in an effort to protest what they say is an unethical "fast fashion" industry.

Janzen, 31, is a member of Winnipeg's Hope Mennonite Church and the owner of Reclaim Mending, a small business that offers sewing lessons, custom pieces, clothes mending and alterations. She says it was incredible to see so many people show up to fly in the face of capitalism: "We wanted to create a space where we could gather as a community of makers and menders to protest 'fast fashion' and consumerism."

Epp, 32, is a member of Toronto United Mennonite Church and served as the regional coordinator for Winnipeg's Fashion Revolution Week. She helped

organize the week's activities, including a gala and screening of the documentary film *The True Cost*.

"Each of the 60 people who showed up for the gala seemed absolutely delighted to be there, which was very gratifying to me as the host," she says.

The week wrapped up with a clothing swap and fashion show, which featured locally made and thrifted looks, proving to onlookers that thrifted clothes are fashionable.

## Fashion revolutionaries

Ethical fashion is more than just a week of events for Epp and Janzen. Both have made pledges to make or buy almost exclusively from local, ethical companies or second-hand.

"I make over 50 percent of my clothes, but I also love seeking out brands that are doing innovative things with how clothing and shoes can be made," Epp says.

Janzen makes a living off of mending people's clothes, but her sewing machines, fabric and other tools of the trade are thrifted.

Much of her wardrobe is thrifted or bought from ethical companies. "We [in the Fashion Revolution world] always say that the most sustainable thing in your wardrobe is what you already have," she says. "I'm a big advocate for mending and making loved clothes last. I don't do a lot of purchasing in general."

Epp's involvement in the week-long events made her want to go a step further.

"This Fashion Revolution Week has made me think more about the next step of my sustainable fashion journey," she says. "I think it is to consume less. I want to be more conscious and ask myself, 'Do I actually need that?'"

It also helped her realize the power of the collective in calling for change. "Through these events I've met so many people I didn't know before, who are



**Elise Epp, the regional coordinator for Fashion Revolution Winnipeg, wore a Horses Atelier jumpsuit to the Fashion Revolution Week gala in Winnipeg.**

PHOTOS BY  
MATTHEW  
SAWATZKY

**Anna-Marie Janzen wore a dress she made herself from thrifted fabric at the Fashion Revolution Week gala in Winnipeg.**



doing their own little fight," she says. "Bringing us all together, we can amplify and give us a bigger voice in the community."

While some might feel that buying ethical clothing is out of their price range, the duo say that cultivating an ethical wardrobe means buying fewer items that last longer.

"Instead of buying a lot of bad-quality things, you use all of that money to buy a few good quality things that you actually like and are made of better quality materials that last longer," Janzen says.

They hope that more Mennonites will join them in calling for a fashion revolution.

"If we claim to be people of peace, and that's a big part of our identity as Mennonites, but our dollars are supporting such violence, then we're not living up to our own ethos," Janzen says. ❧

# Mediating in the church

*Dawson Creek lawyer works in conflict, transformation*

By Amy Rinner Waddell  
B.C. Correspondent

As a lawyer for more than 40 years, Wayne Plenert has seen his share of interpersonal conflicts in the secular world. But, now retired and a member of Northgate Anabaptist Fellowship of Dawson Creek, B.C., he believes that conflicts also are inevitable in faith communities and are too often destructive, with damaging fallout.

His interest in mediation started in 1982, when he took a Bible and law course offered by what is now Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., and realized this might be a good connection between his faith and his work.

“From early on, I wanted to connect my work and faith, and the intersection is conflict transformation,” says Plenert, who was president of the B.C. Mediator Roster Society and then vice-chair of the Mediate B.C. Society. He has also trained and mentored mediators in B.C. and Alberta.

In church conflict, like any other area, he says that people generally feel the need to win (“I am right; you are wrong”), or avoid (“Let’s ignore this, or change churches or conferences”). Mediation does not feel natural, he says, because the human brain is wired to end conflict either by winning or avoiding, the “fight or flight” response, and people and groups generally “escalate against” the other side rather than “engage with” the other.

“This model is also about blame,” he explains. “Our instincts are to look to the past. This involves grief, dysfunction and sometimes toxicity. Relationships are transformed for the worse.”

While conflicts are inevitable, Plenert finds that addressing them in the church community can be particularly challenging.

“The problem is that too many in the church, including leadership, do not see



PHOTO COURTESY OF WAYNE PLENERT

**Wayne Plenert uses a variety of techniques to get people to engage in their conflict instead of trying to win, avoid or compromise.**



the sociology behind it all,” he says. “They think the problem is only about religion and faith, not about how people behave, and do not link the behaviours by Christians with these patterns.”

When things get serious enough between conflicting parties, often someone else—or the system—may find a way for those in conflict to face each other. Plenert is called in to lead a meeting, known as mediation when it is about a dispute, and facilitation when it is about broader unhealthy situations.

“My goal is getting people to consider a future focus and, to the greatest appropriate extent, work on their problems together,” he says. “This may involve the specific issue of the dispute, or, if it

affects relationship [as in families, workplaces, churches]; also on how the parties can have healthy ongoing processes and structures for addressing their differences.”

He uses a variety of techniques to get people to engage in their conflict instead of trying to win, avoid or compromise. “There are ways to get people to integrate,” he says. “There are ways to get people to accept a truce, then to work on things.”

He acknowledges the work of John Paul Lederach, a Mennonite scholar known for his writing on conflict resolution and transformation, in explaining the stages of conflict transformation:

- **First is peacemaking** (a truce).
- **Then peacekeeping** (using the truce to allow people to move on, being more mid-term in focus).
- **Finally, peacebuilding** (developing processes and structures with long-term goals).

Plenert also points to the Apostle Paul, who shows an example of working through conflict in Philippians 4:2-3, which, he believes, illustrates the principles of mediation systems. Paul wrote to the church, noting that two women in leadership of the Philippian church, Euodia and Syntyche, were experiencing some kind of conflict. Paul doesn’t take sides but urges the two women to get along, and he appoints a neutral party who he perceives would be acceptable to both sides to help them sort out their differences.

Paul demonstrates how good leaders can encourage cooperation, appoint mediators and maintain neutrality, all while encouraging a focus on the larger goals of their church. ☿



# Sourdough spirituality

*Saskatoon baker uses bread as a vehicle for change*

Story and Photos by Donna Schulz  
Saskatchewan Correspondent  
SASKATOON



**B**aking bread is more than just a business for Joel Kroeker. It's also a way to further important conversations.

With a deftness that comes from repetition, he slides another two loaves of bread into the oven. By the time he finishes for the day he will have baked 20 loaves and mixed another batch of dough for the next day's orders.

"I do all the mixing by hand," he says. "Today's bake was 16 kilograms of dough. Each loaf weighs 800 grams before baking." Although he has contemplated buying a mixer, he says, "I enjoy mixing. It gives opportunities to be mindful and meditative, and it engages the senses."

Kroeker bakes only sourdough breads. His four starters are made from whole wheat, spelt, rye and white flours, respectively. He feeds them daily with flour and water, and lets them ferment in

the fridge.

"Sourdough is sort of like a pet," he says. "The bigger it is, the more you need to feed it." For this reason he intentionally keeps the starters small, scooping out what's not needed and storing it for later use in pancakes or waffles.

Prior to starting his own home-based business, Kroeker worked in a bakery. "It was a learning time for me," he says. He acquired the basics of sourdough baking from a book but says that, while "books and videos are helpful, there's something about working alongside someone and doing it over and over" that makes the learning more effective.

Last year, he was asked to make 200 pizza crusts for a wedding. He saw it as a perfect opportunity to master the art of tossing pizza dough.

Baker Kræker, as his customers know him, sells his bread by subscription. Most customers purchase one loaf a week, and he encourages them to subscribe for at least a month. Those who sign up for four months are invited to share a pizza meal with him and his family.

Many of his customers live in Kroeker's



**Each loaf is stencilled and then slashed to allow for rising while baking.**

City Park neighbourhood of Saskatoon, and drop by his home to pick up their loaves. About eight of his 60 subscribers "prefer the convenience of having it delivered," he says.

When asked how his faith in Christ informs his business Kroeker, who attends Saskatoon's Wildwood Mennonite Church, says, "The most visible way is in the issues that I'm highlighting." He stencils a message on each loaf of bread he bakes. Those messages "stem from my beliefs," he says, adding, "It all ties into my image of God and how the world was created to be. I don't often make explicit my faith perspective. I don't hide it, but, for me, my goal is to further conversations."

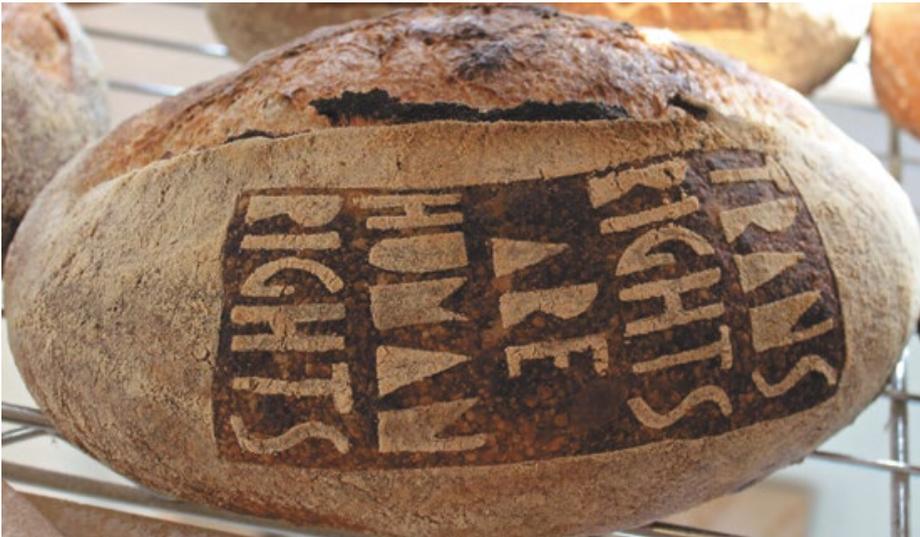
Kroeker's loaves have featured such simple words and phrases as "Peace" or "Let's be kind," but also more challenging messages, including "Implement UNDRIP," "Basic income is dignity," and, "Trans



**Joel Kroeker mixes sourdough starter at his dining room table as his daughter Rehema looks on.**



**Each stencil Joel Kroeker uses in his breadmaking is cut free-hand from cardstock.**



*Each loaf Joel Kroeker bakes comes with a message he hopes will further conversation around the table. This one says, 'Trans rights are human rights.'*

rights are human rights."

"I'm taking sides, sometimes more strongly than others," he says, "but I always want there to be room for everybody to have a spot at the table." He adds, "Hopefully I'm leaving room and not coming at it from a place of holier-than-thou anger or judgment."

Kroeker has been working with sourdough for about six years. Prior to that, he and his partner, Heather Peters, served under Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in South Sudan for two-and-a-half years. "We came back early because I was not coping well," he admits. "There was so much violence around, and I didn't know how to cope with the stories I was hearing."

Currently, Peters works as peacebuilding coordinator for MCC Saskatchewan, but Kroeker credits her with much of the organizational work for the business.

Some time ago, the couple presented a



*Two loaves are already baking as Joel Kroeker slides another two into the oven beside them. Before leaving them to bake, he will toss two ice cubes into the cast iron skillet on the oven floor. Steam that rises as the ice melts will help the bread to develop the desired crust.*

series of talks at a regional retreat for MCC workers. They entitled their talks "Sourdough spirituality," he says, "Heather focused on trauma awareness and community-based coping strategies, and I



*Joel Kroeker readies another two loaves of sourdough bread for the oven.*



*Joel Kroeker, right, hands a fresh loaf of bread to subscriber Aaron Frigstad.*

talked about aspects of the breadmaking process as metaphors for spirituality."

Social change, like breadmaking, requires patience. "You can't force things," Kroeker says. "It takes time, but you can push things along" by using warmer water to speed up the process. When it comes to social change, "you have to be present for those moments to know when it's ready," he says. "What I [try to do is] push things along, keep conversations going." ❧

*To view a video of Joel Kroeker preparing loaves of sourdough bread in his home bakery, visit [canadianmennonite.org/sourdough-spirituality](http://canadianmennonite.org/sourdough-spirituality).*



*'Piec, loaf & understanding' is the motto of Joel Kroeker's bakery business, Bæker Kræker.*

# Ethiopian church plant dreams big

Story and Photos by Joanne De Jong  
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*  
EDMONTON



**Bethel International Church Edmonton Oromo Congregation families are pictured at the front of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in Edmonton, where they meet for services.**

“I have big dreams,” says Pastor Mezgebu A. Tucho of the Bethel International Church Edmonton Oromo Congregation.

Born in Ethiopia, Tucho has planted more than 50 Oromo churches throughout Ethiopia and has travelled in Kenya, the United States, Canada and Australia, preaching the gospel. His passion is for his people from the Oromo tribe, who number more than 34 million worldwide, with 3,000 living in the city of Edmonton, where he planted Bethel International in 2016.

After pastoring a church in Toronto for seven years, he felt God calling him to Edmonton. “God gave me a vision to plant a church in Edmonton . . . in June 2014,” he says, “and for two years I prayed on it. Finally, I decided and came to Edmonton Feb. 26, 2016.”

After three years, the church now has between 40 and 45 members, with around 30 attending on a Sunday. This is the first time Tucho has not taken a salary. He works as a security guard four nights a week doing 12-hour shifts. He shares how it was a personal challenge not getting enough sleep: “Although it is a struggle, I enjoy the opportunity to study and prepare my sermons without interruption.”

He says that he is able to accomplish a work-life balance because of his model of ministry, which involves training a pastor within the congregation to eventually take over, and to appoint leaders who are responsible for specific ministry tasks. Bethel International has five main leaders: a prayer team leader; a women’s ministry leader; a worship leader; a youth



**The last Sunday of each month for the Bethel International Church Edmonton Oromo Congregation is a fast and prayer time followed by a Bible study. The fast is broken with a barley drink and coffee. Serving the drinks is Ebissie Besso, the wife of Pastor Mezgebu A. Tucho.**

leader; and a Bible study and preaching leader, which is currently being filled by Tucho. Each leader is trusted to lead and to bring problems to the team for discussion when they have their monthly meetings.

Bethel International officially became a member of Mennonite Church Alberta in 2018. The reason why it became a Mennonite church, Tucho says, is because, “[i]n Ethiopia I worked with the Full Gospel Church, and we saw the Mennonites [Meserete Kristos] as part of our family. When we began the church in Edmonton, some of our members were Mennonites from Ethiopia. When I see Mennonites, I think ‘biblically based,’ and that’s what we wanted to be.”

Tucho says that one challenge the congregation faces is the commitment to holiness. Some people want to belong to the church for ethnic reasons, but the leadership is interested in producing disciples who are serious about following Christ.

“The gospel is not about quantity but about quality,” he says. “If the gospel doesn’t change the people, what is the point? I’ve seen the gospel change the personal life. We can’t compromise to have numbers. How we speak, how we react in the world, is our witness.”

A final challenge to the congregation regards its youth. The next generation of young people will not speak the Oromo



*Pastor Mezgebu A. Tucho says that one of the things he loves about this congregations is that ‘they love to learn the Word of God. They have an appetite. They ask me to learn more, and this gives me joy.’*

language fluently, Tucho notes, so they need to look ahead to having an English pastor.

He says that one of things he loves about this congregations is that “they love to learn the Word of God. They have an appetite. They ask me to learn more, and this gives me joy.”

Bethel International meets Sunday after- noons at Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in Edmonton. Once a month, the congregation has a fasting and prayer service followed by a Bible study. During the prayer time people focus on the big dreams:

- **To reach** all Oromo people, both in Edmonton and beyond.
- **To do** discipleship and leadership training along the borders where Ethiopia meets Kenya and Sudan.
- **To join** their new MC Alberta family in mission wherever that may lead. ☸



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**A daughter named Genesis**

Lethbridge, Alta., pastor Ryan Dueck reflects on a recent visit to a correctional institution on the CM blog.

[canadianmennonite.org/blog/rd-genesis](http://canadianmennonite.org/blog/rd-genesis)



**Praying through the decades**

A Sunday school assignment in the 1940s began an Ontario woman’s lifelong investment in prayer for India.

[canadianmennonite.org/eb-prayer](http://canadianmennonite.org/eb-prayer)



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Watch a short video about a soup-making social enterprise run partially out of a Mennonite church in Kitchener, Ont.

[canadianmennonite.org/video/rawcarrot](http://canadianmennonite.org/video/rawcarrot)



**What does it mean to be Anabaptist today?**

On the CM blog, Columbia Bible College professor Gareth Brandt asks: How can Anabaptists best show their allegiance to Christ today?

[canadianmennonite.org/blog/anabaptism-today](http://canadianmennonite.org/blog/anabaptism-today)

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**What does it mean to be Anabaptist today?**

I am not one of those people who says, “I’m not religious, I just love Jesus” or “I don’t belong to any denomination, I’m just a Christian.” Rather, I have sometimes said, “Those... [Read More](#)

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## /// Obituary

### MCC thrift shop cofounder dies



Linie (Krahn) Friesen was born Aug. 22, 1921, in Ukraine, and died in Altona, Man., on April 11, 2019, at age 97. The oldest child of Peter and Justina Krahn, she migrated to Canada with her family in 1928 and taught school in southern Manitoba for five years before her marriage to Ted Friesen on Sept. 23, 1945, at Altona Bergthaler Church. She and her husband lived in Altona for the rest of their lives, providing leadership in their community and church. Linie and Ted were charter members of Altona Mennonite Church. Like other women of her time, Linie's support of her husband advanced his work. Together with his brothers, Ted founded the Friesen printing company, and he provided leadership in such things as creating the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada and spearheading *The Canadian Mennonite*, a new English-language newspaper begun in 1953 that eventually became *Canadian Mennonite* magazine. But Linie was also a leader in her own right, presiding over women's organizations, including Women in Mission of Manitoba. A supporter of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), she was one of the four women who began the very first MCC thrift shop in Altona in March 1972. She was predeceased by her husband Ted Friesen on Feb. 15, 2016. She is survived by three sons, their spouses and families.

—BY BARB DRAPER

## ServiceLinks

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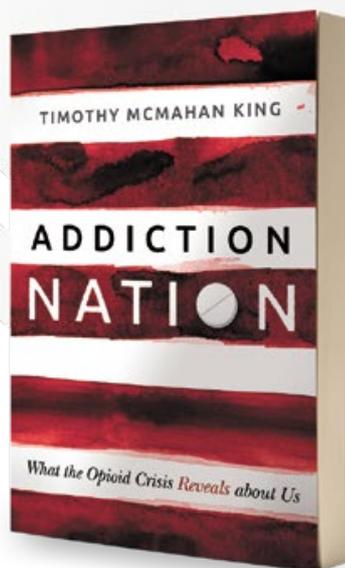
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## Summer releases from **HERALD PRESS**



*“Opioids claim the lives of 115 people per day. One of them could have been me.”*

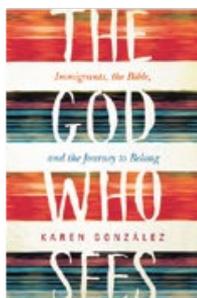
### **ADDICTION NATION**

*What the Opioid Crisis Reveals about Us*

by Timothy McMahan King. 978-1-5138-0406-4. PB. \$17.99

When a near-fatal illness led his doctors to prescribe narcotics, King ended up where millions of others have: addicted. Eventually he learned to manage pain without opioids—but not before he began asking profound spiritual questions about addiction, the companies complicit in creating the opioid epidemic, and the paths toward healing and recovery.

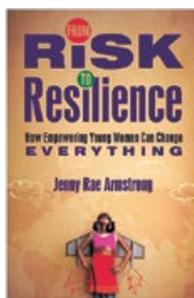
## MORE TITLES COMING FROM HERALD PRESS



**The God Who Sees**  
Immigrants, the Bible, and  
the Journey to Belong

by Karen Gonzalez  
9781513804125. PB. \$16.99.

An immigrant's personal account and a reminder of people in Scripture who also crossed borders. Resources for welcoming immigrants and speaking out about an outdated immigration system.



**From Risk to Resilience**  
How Empowering Young  
Women Can Change Everything

by Jenny Rae Armstrong  
9781513804095. PB. \$16.99.

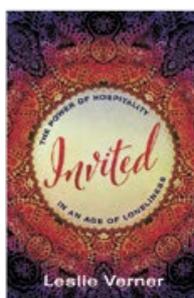
Young women around the world face many dangers: gender-based violence, child marriage, healthcare gaps, and damaging social attitudes. Armstrong offers a stirring call to action.



**By the Way**  
Getting Serious about Following Jesus

by Derek Vreeland  
9781513805863. PB. \$16.99.

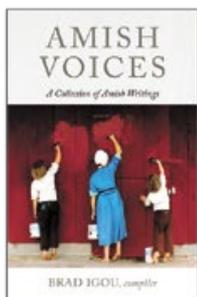
Discipleship isn't an add-on. Jesus didn't say, "Get people saved." Jesus said, "Make disciples." Reclaim discipleship as the heart of the Christian faith. Learn the ways of Jesus by practicing them.



**Invited**  
The Power of Hospitality  
in an Age of Loneliness

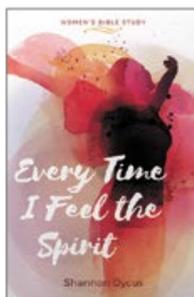
by Leslie Verner  
9781513804330. PB. \$16.99.

Christ-like hospitality is not clean, comfortable, or controlled. *Invited* will empower you to open your home, get to know your neighbors, and prioritize people over tasks.



**Amish Voices**  
A Collection of Amish Writings

9781513805832. PB. \$15.99  
Amish writers share news and advice from their communities and reflect on their daily lives, work, and faith. Hear what they think about technology, shunning, rumspringa, and forgiveness in this behind-the-scenes tour of Amish life.



**Every Time I Feel the Spirit**  
Women's Bible Study

by Shannon W. Dycus  
9781513804903. PB. \$9.99.

This Bible study traces the creative power of the Spirit among women of Scripture, to women of history, to us. Author and pastor Shannon W. Dycus compels readers to explore what we personally inherit from our lineage in the Spirit.

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**HERALD PRESS**

# 'Employment has given me my life's purpose'

by Angelika Dawson

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.—Whether he's working behind the desk in the office or out on the truck, Justin Beals enjoys his job as the operations coordinator with Communitas Social Enterprises (CSE). "I'm smart enough to be the operations coordinator. Crazy enough to love it," he says.

CSE is a program of Communitas Supportive Care Society. CSE provides employment and training to individuals living with mental-health challenges, developmental disabilities or acquired brain injury. Its two longest-running social enterprises are ShredMasters and ValleyRecycling, which have been providing quality recycling and shredding in B.C.'s Fraser Valley since 1992.

Justin came to CSE through another Communitas program called STEP (Support Towards Employment Program).

STEP offers people diagnosed with

mental illness the opportunity to receive support from an employment specialist as well as opportunities for work experience through CSE. The program is focused on helping people achieve a reclaimed vocational life.

Justin has been with the company since 2007 and has grown into the job, taking on more responsibilities as time has passed. More than that, he's grown into the person he is today because his job is more than a place to shred paper and recycle materials. For Justin, who lives with mental illness, doing this work enabled him to find himself again.

"Employment has been an immensely integral part of my recovery to wellness," he says. "Being employed by Communitas for over 10 years has provided stability for me. I've lived at three different places, have been married and widowed, lost my mother and I'm on my third car. All these life situations

changed, but the job has remained constant."

Before Justin came to STEP, he had been in and out of hospital for four consecutive years, diagnosed with bipolar disorder. He was at a point in his life where he was unable to work and had to go on disability assistance. He has always been passionate about recycling, so when a friend told him about STEP, he decided to give it a try. He started slowly, working one day a week, then two. He noticed a difference right away.

"I started feeling better, mentally and physically," he says. "Doing physical activity and being out around town all day, seeing different sites, made me feel more mentally alive."

Donna Esau is an employment specialist with STEP. She says that having work makes an enormous difference to a person's mental wellness.

"When the people we serve first come to me, many of them are quiet, not confident in themselves, and unsure of what they really want," Esau says. "We take the time to get to know them and develop their skills to prepare them for employment. With time, their confidence begins to build. They begin to see possibilities and become hopeful. When they do finally get a job, I see happiness, satisfaction and a confidence that they can work and participate in life."

Esau says that having a reason to get up every morning, a positive place to go to and the chance to earn money all make an impact on one's mental health. Meaningful employment gives people access to things many of us take for granted: the ability to participate in social activities, to travel, to make purchases. It



*Justin enjoys his job as the operations coordinator with Communitas Social Enterprises (CSE). 'I'm smart enough to be the operations coordinator. Crazy enough to love it,' he says.*

connects people to society around them in a healthy way.

“Employment gives people an outward focus. It opens up doors of opportunity to meet new people, grow as a person, and feel like one is contributing to society,” she says.

This was definitely true for Justin. As he grew more confident, he was given more responsibility. It took four attempts for him to achieve his Class 4 driver’s license. Eventually he succeeded and then he became a driver/mentor to other clients. Over time, it became clear that Justin had strong organizational skills; he was fast and efficient. Soon he was managing accounts in the office. Justin took each step slowly, adjusting to the new process, feeling his way into his strengths. Today he works full-time and says that having an employer who understands mental illness and who treats him with dignity and respect has been essential.

“Employment with Communitas has been a huge blessing on so many levels,” he says. “This organization’s mission statement of being a place of belonging, growth and contribution doesn’t just apply to the people that it serves but to its

employees too.”

For some people, work is simply a paycheck, but for Justin it is much more. A stable income has been vital to his mental health, reducing stress and giving him purpose. His work at CSE can be quite active, which keeps him physically healthy, too. It has allowed him to be part of a larger community, and the fact that he loves coming to work each day is a huge bonus.

“Employment has given me my life’s purpose and it is especially meaningful to work alongside others who live with mental illness,” he says. “I feel that I belong to something larger, and I enjoy working with like-minded, big-hearted people. I’ve grown as an individual. I’ve contributed my time and energy, ideas, participation and perhaps made some sort of difference in people’s lives in the process by just being genuine and authentic. I love my work here.”

Communitas is a faith-based, registered charity that supports people with mental-health challenges, developmental disabilities and acquired brain injury. For more information, visit [CommunitasCare.com](http://CommunitasCare.com). For more information about Communitas Social Enterprises, visit [CommunitasEnterprises.com](http://CommunitasEnterprises.com).



*‘Employment has given me my life’s purpose and it is especially meaningful to work alongside others who live with mental illness,’ says Justin.*

### God of All Comfort

Mental Health Resources for Church Worship

Introduction

Fast Facts about Mental Illness

Materials for Worship

Mental Health Stories and Videos

Bulletin Insert

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Feedback



Download a free copy of “God of All Comfort,” a resource focusing on mental health in worship at [CommunitasCare.com/about-us/resources](http://CommunitasCare.com/about-us/resources).

### Statistically speaking

- Statistics indicate that 20 percent of Canadians will experience mental illness in their lifetime. It affects all of us at some time, whether personally, through a family member, a friend or colleague. That means we share our pews with people who are living this experience, but because of the stigma that still surrounds mental illness, many who are affected by it do so in silence.
- 70-90 percent of people living with serious mental illness are unemployed.
- Unemployment rates for people living with anxiety and depression can be as high as 30 percent.
- Meaningful work can add to a livable income, decent housing and good social support, all of which can have a positive impact on health and well-being, and help people recover from mental-health challenges.

— **Canadian Mental Health Association**



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## Calendar

### British Columbia

**June 2:** Homecoming celebration service at Sherbrooke Mennonite Church, Vancouver, at 10:30 a.m.

**June 28-July 1:** "Igniting the imagination of the church" MC Canada delegate assembly, at the Quality Hotel and Conference Centre, Abbotsford: (28) leaders assembly; (29) business/delegate meeting; (29-1) inspirational conference. Special events for youth and children.

### Alberta

**May 31-June 1:** MCC Relief Sale, in Coaldale.

**June 7-9:** MC Alberta women's retreat, at the Sunnyside Retreat Centre, Sylvan Lake. Speaker: Irma Fast Dueck. Theme: "The faces of Mary: Companion on the journey." To register, visit [mcaawomen.ca](http://mcaawomen.ca).

**June 12:** Annual heritage retreat, at Camp Valaqua. For more information, email [ruthannagetsmail@gmail.com](mailto:ruthannagetsmail@gmail.com).

**June 15:** Camp Valaqua hike-a-thon fundraiser. For more information or to sponsor a hiker, call 403-637-2510.

**June 16:** Camp Valaqua garden party. For more information, call 403-637-2510.

### Saskatchewan

**June 15:** Voices Together worship workshop, at Mount Royal Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. For more information, visit [mcsask.ca/mc-sask-events](http://mcsask.ca/mc-sask-events).

**June 21-23:** RJC musical, alumni reunions and graduation weekend, Rosthern.

**July 28-Aug. 1:** "Shake: Rattled by the Radical," a gathering for Mennonite youth in grades 6 to 12, at Shekinah Retreat Centre. For more information, visit [prairieyouth.ca](http://prairieyouth.ca).

### Manitoba

**May 24-25:** MCC Manitoba Spring Fest and Quilt Show, Winnipeg. Besides the quilt show and sale, which includes the Dresden Plate Tearoom and a raffle, other events also include a barbecue lunch and plant sale. Proceeds from the festival will go towards relief kits.

**May 24-26:** 18th annual birdwatching weekend, at Camp Moose Lake. For more information, or to register, visit [campswithmeaning.org/news/birding-retreat](http://campswithmeaning.org/news/birding-retreat).

**May 25:** Russländer tribute fundraising banquet for the Mennonite Heritage Village Centre roof replacement, at the Village, from 4 to 9 p.m. For more information, visit [mvh.ca](http://mvh.ca).

**May 29:** Westgate Mennonite Collegiate junior-high spring concert, at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

**May 30:** Westgate Mennonite Collegiate senior-high spring concert, at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

**May 31-June 1:** "#ChurchToo conference, responding to professional sexual misconduct in the church, at CMU. Planned jointly by CMU, MC Manitoba, MB Manitoba and MCC.

### Ontario

**May 24-25:** New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale. For more information, visit [nhms.com](http://nhms.com).



## explore

**Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth** allows young people (grades 10 to 12) to engage their faith questions, develop their passion for ministry and test their leadership gifts.

The program includes:

- **16-day group experience** in Elkhart, Indiana, in July
- **100-hour congregational experience** with a mentoring pastor

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Visit [amsb.ca/explore](http://amsb.ca/explore)



## Gathering 2019

### Igniting the Imagination of the Church

*A gathering of our nationwide MC Canada family*

June 28 to July 1, 2019  
Abbotsford, B.C.

**Guest Speaker: Dr. Elaine Heath**

- *Worship and workshops*
- *Youth events, including an overnight stay at Camp Squeah*
- *Programs for children*
- *Leadership Day for pastors and lay leaders*
- *MC Canada AGM for delegates*
- *Field trips to local communities and ministries*

**REGISTER NOW!**

[www.ignitegathering2019.ca](http://www.ignitegathering2019.ca)



**May 26:** Detweiler Meetinghouse community memorial service, at 3 p.m. For more information, call 519-504-4591.

**May 30:** Fretz Visiting Scholar Lecture, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, at 7:30 p.m. Speaker: Ben Nobbs-Thiessen. Topic: "Feeding the colony, the nation and the market: Transported foodways and new crops in Latin American Mennonite colonies." Reception to follow.

**June 6-8:** "Land and place," a North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies symposium on Indigenous theology, at Tyndale Seminary, Toronto. MC Canada will help sponsor six participants from the nationwide church who want to attend. For more information, email Steve Heinrichs at sheinrichs@mennonitechurch.ca.

**June 11:** Chicken barbecue and pie auction fundraiser, at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg, from 5 to 7:30 p.m. Advanced tickets only. For tickets, call 519-625-8602.

**June 12-13:** "Healthy boundaries in the context of ministry," at First Mennonite Church, Kitchener. For more information, visit mcec.ca.

**June 13-14:** "Spirituality and aging" retreat, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo.

**June 22:** Annual Nithview Community strawberry social, New Hamburg, from 2 to 4 p.m., and 6:30 to 8 p.m.

**June 22:** MennoHomes Out-Spok'n for Affordable Housing Bike-a-thon, at Elmira Mennonite Church. Options for hikers, recreational bikers and avid cyclists. For more information, visit mennohomes.com.

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



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**Two teaching positions**

**1.0 FTE term position (September 2019 - June 2020); High school classroom teacher: senior level math and physics**

**1.0 FTE term position (September 2019 - January 2020) High school classroom teacher: duties somewhat flexible depending on training and skills of applicant—humanities, lower level (grade 9 and 10) math and science, and possibly Bible and Mennonite studies.**

Qualifications for both positions also include a valid Manitoba teaching certificate and commitment to education in an Anabaptist, faith-based setting.

Interested applicants should submit their resume to Bernie Loeppky at [bernieloepky@mciblues.net](mailto:bernieloepky@mciblues.net).

**Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Altona**

**Employment Opportunity**

**Associate Pastor of Youth Ministries**

The **Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Altona** is seeking to hire an **Associate Pastor of Youth Ministry**. The individual has a deep love for God and is passionate about engaging in meaningful relationships with the youth of our congregation and wider community - providing spiritual guidance, friendship, and a place to feel welcome and safe.

The Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Altona is a group of ordinary people who share faith in an extraordinary God and follow an extraordinary Saviour, Jesus Christ. We express our love for God through worship, community, and service. As disciples of Jesus, we aspire to be a sign of God's kingdom in Altona and beyond. [www.abchurchcommunity.ca](http://www.abchurchcommunity.ca)

Altona is a bustling rural community, just one hour south of Winnipeg, in the heart of south central Manitoba. [www.altona.ca](http://www.altona.ca)

For a full job description, or to submit letters of interest and resumes, please contact Andrew Rempel, Search Committee Chair ([andrewmempel@gmail.com](mailto:andrewmempel@gmail.com)) or Kathy Giesbrecht at Mennonite Church Manitoba ([kgiesbrecht@mennochurch.mb.ca](mailto:kgiesbrecht@mennochurch.mb.ca)).

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**Classifieds**

**Employment Opportunities**

Mennonite Church Manitoba (MCM) invites applications for the new 0.5 FTE Director of Church Engagement.

Responsibilities will include: nurturing relationships with congregations and our Mennonite Church Canada International Witness workers; promoting and supporting the ministries of MCM; and developing relationships with donors. For more info, visit [www.mennochurch.mb.ca](http://www.mennochurch.mb.ca) or contact Ken Warkentin at **204-896-1616**.

**Mennonite Church Manitoba**

**FOOTHILLS Mennonite Church**

Employment opportunity

**Intentional Transition Pastor**

Calgary, Alberta

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An Intentional Transition Pastor is sought to guide the congregation after the departure of its lead pastor of 20 years. We invite you to acquaint yourself with us by visiting our website, [www.foothillsmennonite.com](http://www.foothillsmennonite.com). Foothills MC is an Anabaptist faith community that desires to embody, share and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. Job description available on request.

Calgary is a large, modern city with excellent educational opportunities and ready access to Canada's national mountain parks.

Please direct inquiries to: [office@foothillsmennonite.ca](mailto:office@foothillsmennonite.ca), Attention of the Chair, Search Committee.

CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY PHOTO

*A clarinetist from Manitoba is the winner of the 14th annual Verna Mae Janzen Music Competition at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU). The performance by Stephanie Wilson earned her first place and the \$700 prize that comes with it, on March 20. She is the first clarinetist to ever win the competition. 'Being the first clarinetist to ever win has been a surreal experience,' says Wilson, who grew up in Winnipeg. 'As exciting as it was to win, the real honour has been bringing new life to the competition through introducing a new instrument. I think it's a super exciting time for CMU, as more and more students participate on different instruments, and audiences become more interested in seeing a variety of instruments perform.' Nathan Dyck, a baritone in his third year of a bachelor of music degree in vocal performance, placed second, while third place went to pianist Madeleine Friesen, who is in her fourth year of a bachelor of music degree with concentrations in music education and musicology.*



# Photo finish



PHOTO BY RANDY KLAASSEN / TEXT BY MARIA H. KLASSEN

*St. Catharines (Ont.) United Mennonite Church expressed thankfulness for the combined 90 years of service of four deacons—Erna Schroeder, Rita Hildebrandt, and Helen and Peter Thiessen—on the occasion of their retirement from this ministry. Over the years, they visited many older members of the congregation, providing spiritual care and nurture, and worked with pastoral leaders during baptisms, communion services and fellowship events. Schroeder said she felt that, during her 15 years as deacon, the many hardships in her life were God's way of preparing her to help others when they go through hard times. Hildebrandt said she was blessed and grew spiritually during her 20 years of service. The Thiessens said they were abundantly blessed by the trust and confidence older and younger people expressed in them.*