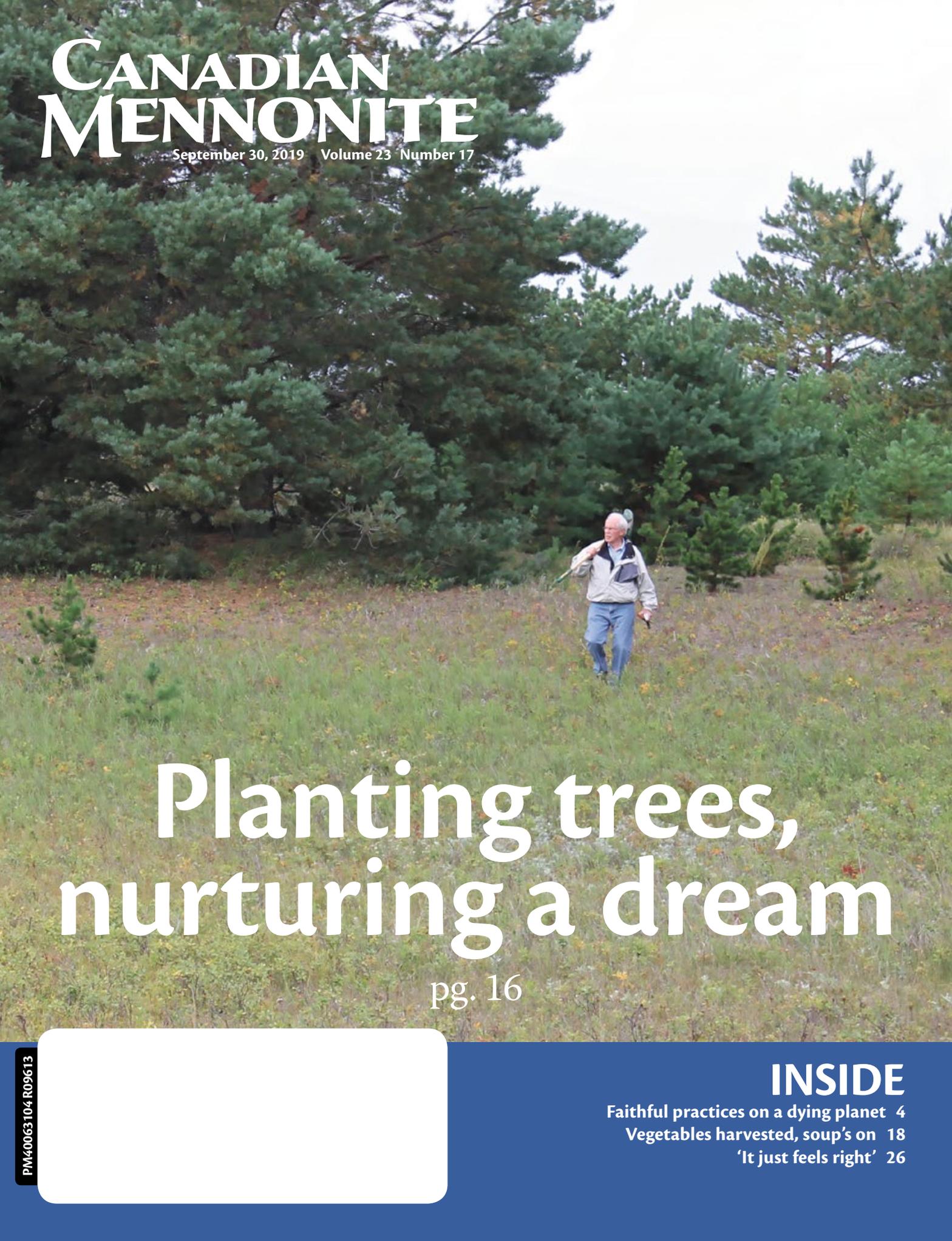


CANADIAN MENNONITE

September 30, 2019 Volume 23 Number 17



Planting trees, nurturing a dream

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EDITORIAL

Disciples and citizens

Virginia A. Hostetler
EXECUTIVE EDITOR



A group of men and women travelled the dusty roads, meeting people, eating together, hearing stories, pondering deep sayings, seeing miracles and conversing with their leader.

They asked him about justice and poverty, about their neighbours and their enemies. They wanted to know who deserved to sit in the important seats. They had questions about points of the law and about correct religious practice. What did the coming reign of God look like? they wondered.

Two thousand years later, some of their activities and questions seem familiar.

Their leader—and ours—started his public ministry with a revolutionary message: sight for the blind ones, freedom for the prisoners, good news for people struggling with poverty, freedom for people under oppression (Luke 4:18-19). These miraculous things would be accomplished through the power of God and the efforts of God's people living lives of faithfulness.

If they had had the chance, how would the diverse disciples have voted in matters affecting their community and their land? The group included a collector of taxes for the empire, people who fished for a living and a political revolutionary. Surely their perspectives would have been quite different. What would the women who provided financial resources to Jesus's group have to say about gender equality and about wealth? How might those accustomed to hard manual work have responded to issues of labour justice?

We can only guess. But we modern disciples have in our hands the teachings and example of our beloved leader, the reality of the Resurrection behind us, and the opportunity, as citizens, to participate in a democracy.

As citizens of Canada prepare to vote on Oct. 21, 21st-century disciples would do well to remember the unique nature of God's reign, as exemplified and taught by Jesus. It has been called the "upside-down kingdom," a reality in which the lowly members of society are raised up and the high are brought down, where children are precious and powerful ones are called to accountability. In this commonwealth, enemies are to be loved and the hungry ones have enough to eat. This is a reality in which material things grant no status, but people invest instead in the "treasures" of heaven: kindness, generosity and peace. In this reign, even the birds of the air and the flowers of the field have value. In God's reign, past misdeeds are forgiven and mercy flourishes for all who choose to accept it.

How can today's disciples vote as we live out the values of the upside-down kingdom? In the weeks leading up to the election, we're considering what matters to us and to our communities. And we're choosing who will sit on the "important seats" of this country. Living in a worldly empire, we dream of God's reign, when things on earth will be as they are in heaven.

In the meantime, let's have thoughtful, respectful conversations about the political choices facing us and the values we care about. Let's pray for our

country's leaders and encourage them to practise justice and mercy. For some helpful resources, check out these:

- **Mennonite Central Committee** calls for "advocacy for justice, peace and human dignity," and offers three non-partisan resources: 2019 Federal Election Resource, MCC Election Resource Companion Guide, and MCC's Tips for Respectful Dialogue. Check with your provincial office or online at mcc.org.
- **Kairos** is a faith-based social justice organization of Canadian churches and religious organizations. To read its Federal Election Resource 2019, call 1-877-403-8933 or download from kairoscanada.org.
- **Citizens for Public Justice** encourages support of "policies and practices which reflect God's call for love, justice and the flourishing of creation." You can order its 2019 Election Bulletin: Shaping a Just Canada from 1-800-667-8046 or download it from cpj.ca.
- **Canadian Council of Churches** is an ecumenical body of which Mennonite Church Canada is a member. See the Justice, and Only Justice, Shall You Pursue: 2019 Federal Election Guide at councilofchurches.ca or call 416-972-9494.
- **Evangelical Fellowship of Canada**, which MC Canada belongs to, released various resources including Federal Election 2019: Faith, Voting and Political engagement. For this and more, go to evangelicalfellowship.ca or call 905-479-5885.

In the midst of heated campaigns and political debates, today's disciples must remember their primary citizenship in the upside-down kingdom. How will our choices demonstrate Christ's call to love God and love our neighbours, above all else? ❧



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Wayne Dueck, pictured, and his wife Carry purchased 32 hectares near Duck Lake, Sask., in 1981, and in the meantime they have planted more than 38,000 white spruce and Scots pine seedlings on what they affectionately refer to as The Land.

PHOTO: DONNA SCHULZ, CANADIAN MENNONITE

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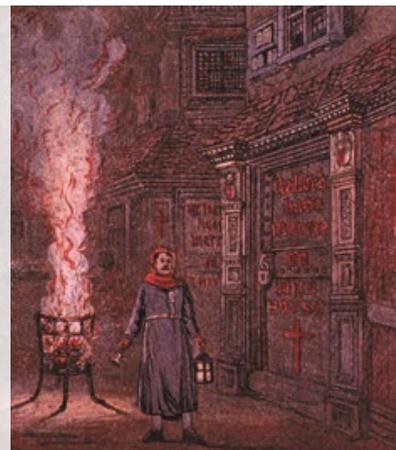
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FEATURE

Faithful practices on a dying planet

How might the church survive—or die faithfully—amid catastrophic climate change?

By Gerald Ens

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*



WIKIMEDIA.ORG PHOTO (PUBLIC DOMAIN)

'Bring out your dead,' by Edmund Evans, circa 1864. This coloured wood engraving pictures a medieval street scene with a town crier and a two-wheeled cart making the rounds and collecting the bodies of plague victims; a few people have gathered around a small fire for warmth.

Over the last few months, the reality of the climate crisis we are in the midst of has started to strike me in a new and terrible way. As the best-case scenarios for our planet grow more dire and the possibility of achieving even these scenarios grows more remote, it has started to dawn on me that the church is not only faced with the task of working to stop the destruction of

our planet.

We now must also confront the question of how we might live and die faithfully on a planet that is dying. As an attempt to do this myself, I tentatively offer four practices for the church that might get us to start thinking about, and living into, how we might continue to be the church on a horribly ravaged Earth.

Hospitality

To be the church, we are going to need to become well practised in an intimate sharing of our lives, resources and homes.

My wife comes from an evangelical church tradition, and one thing that strikes her in the Mennonite churches she's been part of is the absence of foster children. Foster children were at the heart of the churches she grew up in, churches where there was not much talk about "justice."

In rightly calling for greater action on the part of government and institutions, have we forgotten that the call of Jesus incarnate in the "least of these" is a call to each of us to respond with flesh and heart? Has our numbing political culture tricked us into believing that having the right "take" on a news story is a meaningful or neighbourly response?

I think we need to start relearning how to practise radical hospitality by making our homes bigger and more crowded, and our nuclear families messier. This is an old practice for Christians, from the early church practice of Christian households keeping a bed and some bread ready for strangers, to the Christian practice of anonymously adopting abandoned children during the Middle Ages.

Are the relational bonds in our communities strong enough for parents to know that, if they die, their children will be taken care of? Are our habits of charity so well ingrained that, in times of

Are our habits of charity so well ingrained that, in times of desperate scarcity, we will know how to treat the wandering orphan?

desperate scarcity, we will know how to treat the wandering orphan? Hospitality is going to get personal. Are we ready to let God use us to display God's great and most personal hospitality?

Befriending death

Burying the dead is one of the traditional Christian works of mercy. It was, for example, a task that the early Catholic Worker houses took very seriously before death in North America was institutionalized and hidden away. Famously, one of the charities Mother Theresa's Sisters of Mercy performed was providing a dignified way for people to die.

There is soon going to be a lot of dying, and, although I have a hard time

We are going to need to remember that, for Christians, the work of loving the dead and dying is as important as, and sometimes more important than, the work of saving lives.

truly imagining it, it is going to be terrible. We are going to need to remember that, for Christians, the work of loving the dead and dying is as important as, and sometimes more important than, the work of saving lives.

Part of this will mean more fully facing the significance of what it means to be mortal. This will, hopefully, help us to remember that we in the church do not simply serve the hungry, broken, fragile and weak; we ourselves are hungry, broken, fragile and weak. We will only be able to bear the suffering that is to come, and pour out our hearts and lives onto a suffering world and suffering humanity, if we can accept and love our own mortal weakness.

Lament

Before Jesus goes into Jerusalem to be crucified, he laments over the city. He will save the whole world from sin and death, but he knows he will not save Jerusalem from brutal military defeat at the hands of the Romans. On the cross, Jesus quotes the psalmist's desperate cry: *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

And before Jesus raises his friend Lazarus from the dead, having already proclaimed himself to be the resurrection and the life, he weeps for his friend and his loss.

God's call to us is to be bound to the world and each other by God's great love for the world. This will often mean offering up our grieving laments to God.

Concrete acts of lament may be the most important thing that we can do, especially insofar as they might function as a political witness. If there ever was a time when individual action and responsibility might "save the planet," then that time has passed; it is not household consumption—but a handful of the world's largest corporations and

militaries—that are responsible for the vast majority of emissions, to say nothing of the other ways that they wreck and abuse people and the Earth.

However, as a part of the work of lament, individual and community action can be incredibly important. Suffering through the summer heat because you refuse to turn on the AC will not do anything to prevent climate change, but, as a work of solidarity with, and grieving for, creation, it may be one way that we can continue to worship God on a dying planet.

After companies started strip mining the Amazonian rainforest, Brazilian friends of ours essentially stopped buying and using plastic. They are under no illusions that this will make any difference, but, to be true to their grief, they found that they simply could not use plastic any longer.

This is one way to look at the many wonderful people who continue to work the land in sustainable and abundant ways. I fear that, as the planet becomes more unlivable, even these oases will die. The point of healthy land use may then be less about saving humanity and the planet, and more about the defiant work of lament and repentance—of grieving the loss of the world's abundance by continuing to work the land abundantly for as long as this is possible.

We must guard against the heroic despair of declaring that, even if humanity seems likely to perish, at least the planet will survive. We must flee a kind of smug knowledge that seems almost triumphant in being “right” about the end of the world. We should turn, instead, to the work of lament, offering our active grief as prayer to God. This grief is too great for us alone, but we believe, as the song goes, that “nothing is lost on the breath of God.”

A new Jerusalem descends from heaven at the end of the vision in Revelation. Jesus’s cry of abandonment upon the cross comes from Psalm 22, which

If there ever was a time when individual action and responsibility might ‘save the planet,’ then that time has passed. . . .

concludes by declaring that the poor will eat their fill, that the Earth will be abundant, and that all people will renounce their dominating ways and turn to the worship of the true God. After Jesus weeps for his friend, he summons him from the tomb with the power of resurrection. God’s love can hold all of love’s terrible anguish borne out in love’s stricken cries of lament.

Trust

When the city of Jerusalem is about to fall to the Babylonian army, the prophet Jeremiah buys a plot of land outside the city walls. The prophetic message is powerful in its simplicity: This land will again be prosperous.

I’ve heard many of my peers wonder whether it’s irresponsible to have children today. I empathize deeply with this sentiment. It fills me with horror and sorrow to think that my three-year-old son may not live past 30, and that whatever years he has after 15 will probably be filled with a degree of suffering and loss that most of us in North America find hard to comprehend.

Jeremiah speaks to us, not to say that

I’ve heard many of my peers wonder whether it’s irresponsible to have children today. I empathize deeply with this sentiment.

there will not be terrible suffering. What we can get instead from Jeremiah is that the work of love goes on, and that it is good work to do because the God who is love is also good. Our species appears likely to be nearing its end, but we can love while time remains, knowing and trusting that love is never vain.

Jesus names us “beloved” and then calls us to abide within his love, a love that is eternally true (John 15:9). To say this is to trust that nothing, not even death, can separate us from the love of God. The promise of resurrection is the promise that, in some deeply mysterious way, a life of love touches and is held safe within that which is eternal.

This is not the comfort of believing that loss and destruction do not really matter because of the life to come. It is

the comfort of trusting that the Spirit will continue to summon us all to surrender our hearts to the love that endures, even as the world as we know it ends. ❧



Gerald Ens is doing a PhD in religious studies at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ont. After four years in Hamilton, where

he attended Hamilton Mennonite Church, he recently returned to Manitoba with his wife Lisa and son Roger.

❧ For discussion

1. Have you seen evidence in your community that the Earth’s climate is changing? What are the signs in the broader world? How fearful are you about an impending climate crisis? How will your community be affected as temperatures continue to rise?
2. Gerald Ens suggests that we “need to start relearning how to practise radical hospitality.” What does radical hospitality look like? What keeps us from welcoming others into our homes and our country?
3. Ens says that “the work of loving the dead and dying is as important as, and sometimes more important than, the work of saving lives.” Do you agree? Why is it important to befriend death?
4. Lament and repentance are important, says Ens. Why is this a healthy response to the devastation of our ecosystem? What acts of lament can you and your church do to witness to the destruction of the Earth?
5. Do you find yourself in despair over the future of the world? Where do you find comfort and hope? How can we help those who struggle with fear of what the future will bring?

—By Barb Draper

See related resources at
www.commonword.ca/go/1830

CommonWord
Bookstore and Resource Centre

/// Readers write

✉ Senior aches over ‘what the issue of LGBTQ+ has done’

Re: “Queer hymns now online,” Aug. 19, page 35.

This, as I remember it, is my second letter to *Canadian Mennonite* over the many years.

It is disturbing to read this article. Why do we have to change the wording of hymns to suit a certain group in our churches? My God is referred to as “God the Father” and also as “He.” Will the next step be to change how we read Scripture in our worship services?

I am a senior in the church who has ached over what the issue of LGBTQ+ has done to our church and regional churches in Canada and conferences in the United States. We have lost much, and has it been worth it?

Jesus preached unity, not divisiveness.

ANNE HUEBERT, ST. CATHARINES, ONT.

The writer attends St. Catharines United Mennonite Church.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Boertien—MacKenzie Mae (b. Aug. 31, 2019), to Kaitlyn and Justin Boertien, Floradale Mennonite, Ont.

Hildebrandt—Maizy Ann (b. March 14, 2019), to Aaron and Shelly Hildebrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man.

Horniachek—Henry Joseph (b. Aug. 30, 2019), to Angela Schellenberg and Burl Horniachek, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Rauwerda—Elliott Joanne (b. Aug. 9, 2019), to Mark and Ellery Rauwerda, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Richert—Cora Gerbrandt (b. June 3, 2019), to Virginia Gerbrandt Richert and Andrew Richert, Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man.

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

Baptisms

Reed Fitzgerald—Rosthern Mennonite, Sask., Aug. 25, 2019

Marriages

Allum/Enns—Cody Allum and Kate Enns (Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona Man.), in Winnipeg, July 19, 2019.

Desfosses/Rahier—Eric Desfosses and Kirsten Rahier (Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.), in Eglise de Saint-Cyprien, Napierville, Que.

Fehr/Hylton—Sarah Fehr (Faith Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.) and Ellon Hylton, Sept. 7, 2019.

Friesen/Hildebrand—Hayden Friesen (Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man.) and Kiara Hildebrand, in Altona, June 22, 2019.

Hinz/Klassen—Richard Hinz and Judy Klassen, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., Aug. 30, 2019.

Inglis/Wales—Trust Inglis and Kailee Wales (Faith Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.), Aug. 31, 2019.

Lewis/Schmidt—Amanda Lewis and Matthew Schmidt (Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.), in Saskatoon, Aug. 25, 2019.

McClement/Rempel—Paul Tjayden McClement and Erika Rempel (Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man.), in Altona, Sept. 7, 2019.

Neufeld/Penner—Josh Neufeld (Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man.) and Alyssa Penner, in Altona, Aug. 3, 2019.

Deaths

Bergman—Henry, 91 (b. May 18, 1928; d. Aug. 31, 2019), Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Dueck—Elsie, 87 (b. July 25, 1932; d. Aug. 13, 2019), Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man.

Friesen—John J., 89 (b. June 16, 1930; d. Aug. 29, 2019), Osler Mennonite, Sask.

Klassen—Erna (Mathies), 99 (b. Feb. 25, 1920; d. Sept. 9, 2019), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Klassen—Jakob, 89 (b. April 2, 1930; d. May 22, 2019), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Martens—Bill, 75 (b. Sept. 23, 1943; d. July 30, 2019), Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Martin—Ron, 65 (b. Sept. 6, 1953; d. Aug. 13, 2019), Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

Matthies—Hilda, 91 (d. Aug. 27, 2019), Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Neudorf—Justine, 100 (b. Sept. 20, 1918; d. Sept. 2, 2019), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

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

FROM OUR LEADERS

Where heaven and earth meet

Jeanette Hanson

The Temple of Heaven is one of my favourite places in China. It was the place where the emperor went several times a year to offer sacrifices and receive wisdom from the spiritual realm, in order to rule wisely. The temple, with its three-tiered, round, blue roof representing heaven, is surrounded by a square courtyard with green walls representing the earth. It is a space where heaven and earth meet.

The wonder of this union is reflected today in the four characters that are seen on the front wall of almost every Chinese church: *Yi Ma Nei Li* (Emmanuel, God with us)!

As this presence is revealed in Jesus, Calvin E. Shenk writes in *A Relevant Theology of Presence*, “It comes in the form of a person being present among us, sharing human life and the vulnerability of human existence.” This is also the way that Jesus sends out his disciples: not as a conquering king, but as one who is present.

Unless we, as a church, are willing to put ourselves in a position of weakness

by entering into the world of others—to come as a stranger—we always keep control and power. We won’t learn what God has in store for us. When we accept hospitality and kindness, and humble ourselves to listen to, live with and walk with others, we see God through their eyes, hear what God is saying to them and share in the gifts God has given them.

Some years ago, I worked alongside Chinese Christians in a community-service project. A local government official asked me, “Why can’t you Christians just stay home? Why are you always going out?” Good question!

I think part of the answer lies in the character of God.

“As revealed to Moses (Exodus 3:14), ‘I am who I am’ does not merely mean ‘I exist,’” writes Shenk. “It means being involved, being present for and with the other. . . . [T]he cardinal point of the gospel is divine presence to which people are exposed in a personal encounter.”

As we worship God who is present, as we follow Jesus who crossed boundaries

to be present, we also have this desire within us to be present: “A ministry of presence fails to observe the barriers and walls of division found in our world,” writes Shenk. “From the perspective of the gospel, Christ has broken down the wall. If all are part of humankind, breaking down walls should be a natural Christian vocation.”

At Gathering 2019 in Abbotsford, B.C., someone asked me why I would take on the role of interim director of the International Witness program. I quipped, “It gives me life.”

Only later did I realize that my knee-jerk comment was probably more on target than I first imagined. It is the “ministry of reconciliation” that is entrusted to us by God as part of God’s reconciling work. ☞



Jeanette Hanson
(jhanson)

@mennonitechurch.ca is
interim director of Inter-
national Witness for Mennonite
Church Canada.

A moment from yesterday



The Aylmer (Ont.) Mennonite Community Store and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Aylmer Resource Centre are pictured after 1989. Both represent the response of the local community, Low German Mennonites and MCC Ontario to the increase in immigration of Low German Mennonites from Latin America into southwestern Ontario, beginning in the 1970s. Both organizations have become independent and are under local control, the resource centre as Mennonite Community Services of Southern Ontario.

Text: Laureen Harder-Gissing

Photo: MCC Ontario /

Mennonite Archives of Ontario



archives.mhsc.ca

THIRD WAY FAMILY

Intentional with our time

Christina Bartel Barkman

With fall schedules now well underway, I sense the pressure of a “busy” lifestyle creeping in on our days and cramping our summer style. I’ve chatted with many friends who have hopped right into the overwhelming patterns of rushing out the door to yet another soccer practice or piano lesson. With a rainy September and a slew of weekly commitments, lazy summer days at the river have vanished all too quickly.

With two of our kids having birthdays during the first week of school, I somehow managed to pull off hosting two separate birthday parties, several special outings, and family dinners with grandparents, all while attempting to get into a school routine and having my new five-year-old start Kindergarten. And with the fall church schedule, of course my pastor husband had evening church meetings! Oh summer, where did you go?!

Thankfully the weeks following that most hectic birthday-back-to-school week have been much calmer. My husband and I have been very mindful of what we will fill our schedules with and we value the margins we have for spontaneous bike rides, inviting the new neighbour over or enjoying a slow river

walk in our beautiful little town.

We decided to opt out of any kids sports commitments that would include driving out of town or travel on weekends. We have time for father-son mountain biking, weekend morning Lego time, and running over to the neighbours to play with their kittens.

While my nine-year-old would have loved to play on a hockey team, we have to make decisions that work for all of us, one that allows me to volunteer with women at risk on Tuesday nights and lets my husband join our community choir. With our kids still quite young, we’re choosing to do activities that our family can be included in. I volunteer at Kids Club and my husband coaches the weekly basketball camp, both within walking distance of our house.

Being intentional with how we spend our time is a discipline. Much like managing our money, we choose to spend it on what’s important, and, if we spend unwisely, we feel the stress that comes with poor decisions. When we make thoughtful choices based on our values, we can better live within our means and enjoy a healthier, happier life.

As a family, we value time to rest. We need time to be idle: to read, to play a

board game, to jump on the trampoline. For some, too much idleness may not be healthy, and working at keeping schedules busier may be more the focus, but whatever the stage we’re in, being intentional about how we spend our time, and having some control over it, are important.

One of my friends has a weekend routine of long, relaxed chats over coffee with her husband on Saturday mornings; the kids can wait, the chores can wait and the weekend activities can wait. What matters to them on those mornings is slowly sipping coffee and catching up with each other. There are many Saturdays when volleyball tournaments and acting classes get in the way of their coffee time, but it’s amazing how often this quality time can be prioritized when it becomes a valued ritual.

We’re working hard at not letting this school year be governed by church calendars, extra-curricular activities and evening meetings. I want space in my calendar to say yes to last-minute play-dates, helping a friend in need or impromptu afternoon family bike rides. We may have lost our summer weather, but I won’t let fall cramp my summer style! ❧



Christina Bartel Barkman, with her four little ones and her pastor husband, seeks to live out Jesus’ creative and loving “third way” options.

Et cetera

How smart are our smart phones and how smart are we?

In response to a question about the most difficult thing to explain about life today to a person from the 1950s, a Reddit user posted the following: “I possess a device in my pocket that is capable of accessing the entirety of information known to man. I use it to look at pictures of cats and get into arguments with strangers.”

Source: reddit.com



VIEWPOINT

How to talk about money at your church

Lori Guenther Reesor
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

Christians give in grateful obedience to a generous God. Gratitude provides a wonderful pathway to the spiritual discipline of giving. God's mercies to us are new every morning, and we have so much to be grateful for.

Imagine that one or two Sundays every month, someone from the congregation shares a moment of gratitude during worship. I'll call the church Peach Blossom.

Fall

A Sunday school teacher shows a preschooler's drawing of a fish, from the story of the feeding of the five thousand, when a boy who shared his lunch with Jesus.

She says: "I am so grateful to belong to a generous community where we share what God has given us and work together to nurture faith. When you give money to Peach Blossom, we use it to buy Sunday school materials, clean the building, pay the insurance and many, many other things that are all part of faith formation. I am excited to see what God is doing among us, in the preschool class and beyond. It's like the boy and the two fishes, when we share what we have and we trust God that there will be enough.

"We send money to our regional church so that our children and youth can connect to a larger community of faith through camp, retreats and more. I thank God for our family of faith, near and far."

Then she prays: "Thank you, God, for everything you have given us. Help us to live generously and joyfully with the gifts you have entrusted to our care. Help us to trust you, knowing that when we share, there will always be enough.

"Thank you for the gift of this church and for our regional church. Thank you

for Sunday school teachers, for the joyful energy of our children and grandchildren. Thank you for the people who have nurtured our faith in the past and for the people who strengthen our faith today.

"Help us, Lord, to keep learning your ways. Bless us, we pray. Amen."

Eternity Sunday

A retired man shares before the offering: "Twice a year, Peach Blossom leads worship at Pleasant Orchard seniors home. We visit with people as we wheel them to the common area for the service. We sing old hymns, we read the Scripture, we pray. Sometimes the hymnals go missing because people like to have one by their bedside.

"The pastoral care team regularly visits two of our members at Pleasant Orchard, and that is greatly appreciated. The four of us on the pastoral-care team are especially grateful for our pastor, who equips us and encourages us.

"When we visit Pleasant Orchard, sometimes our friends are no longer there. On this Eternity Sunday, we remember our friends and family members who have died. Until we experience it first-hand, we may not realize how much time and energy it takes to lead a funeral. We cannot know about all the counselling our pastor does during times of grief and loss, or the many phone calls, meetings and emails involved.

"Your generosity enables our congregation to have a pastor and church administrator who do so much that we do not see. Donations to Peach Blossom provide a budget for the pastoral care team. We help members with counselling. We pay for new hymnals when the seniors cannot part with them. In the budget, the phonenumber, internet, mileage and office expenses are not listed as

pastoral care or community caring items. But maybe they should be, because they help us to be a caring presence in our community

Then he prays: "Gracious God, thank you for the privilege of giving and sharing together in ministry. Thank you for the people who built this church, both those who have gone before and those people sitting with us today. Thanks for their generosity of time, money, energy and much more. Thank you for the faithful prayers that have carried us through good times and bad.

"We pray for the people unable to attend due to failing health. We are grateful for people who are housebound yet sent a cheque, or who have to work today yet gave online. Thank you for a generous and caring community where we feel your grace-filled presence. Amen."

I hope these examples help you to imagine the kinds of money stories your congregation could share. Paul writes in II Corinthians 9 that recognizing God's surpassing grace results in generosity, and that generosity results in thanksgiving to God. And so our gratitude knows no bounds. Paul concludes, "*Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift*" (9:15 NASB). ☸



Lori Guenther Reesor lives in Mississauga, Ont., and worships at Hamilton Mennonite Church. She is a speaker, writer and

consultant on Christian giving. She blogs at lgresor.com and is currently writing a book about church and money. Her earlier Viewpoint piece, "Why your church needs to talk about money," appeared on page 36 of the Sept. 16 issue of Canadian Mennonite.

LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

Revolutionary hospitality

Troy Watson

When you search “hospitality” online, Google auto-fills with words like industry, services and tourism. You will find links to lodging, food and beverage establishments, entertainment and travel services, and hospitality management training institutions. What you don’t find, unfortunately, are links to Christianity or the church.

Hospitality used to be the trademark of the early church. It was one of the primary virtues Christians were known for. In fact, the early church redefined hospitality in the ancient world.

In his book *The Rise of Christianity*, historian Rodney Stark explains that most outsiders regarded the early church as a dubious cult, resulting in periods of widespread hostility and persecution. In spite of this, the church grew and spread at an unprecedented rate. Why? In large part, because of their radical hospitality. During the plagues Christians took in and cared for strangers who were sick and dying, often getting sick and dying themselves. This kind of hospitality was unheard of and made a lasting impression on the people around them.

Why did the early church practise such risky hospitality? Because Jesus made it central to his movement. In Luke 14, Jesus tells his disciples that when they throw a party or gathering, they shouldn’t invite family, friends and neighbours. Instead, they should invite the sick, poor, lame, blind and homeless. Invite people who have no influence, power, money or status. Welcome people who are alienated, ignored, neglected and persecuted. This was true hospitality. Godly hospitality.

Jesus turned hospitality into a spiritual discipline. Like most disciplines, godly hospitality takes time, intention, effort and the transformative power of the Holy Spirit. The discipline

of godly hospitality reprograms how we think and feel about the “other,” those who are not like us, and it changes who we are, because “we” now includes the stranger, the other and even our enemies.

Radical hospitality became a central practice for the early church. Congregations intentionally welcomed those who were unwelcomed by others. They invited people who didn’t get invited other places. They cared for those who didn’t have anyone to care for them. As a result, Christians became known for their revolutionary hospitality.

This is part of what made the gospel of the early church so offensive to both Jews and gentiles. Rachel Held Evans, who tragically passed away earlier this year, put it this way. “What makes the gospel offensive is not who it keeps out but who it lets in.” Christian hospitality included the people religion and society tried to keep out.

Most churches today would claim to be hospitable. Most churches have a statement like “everyone is welcome” on their website or in their church bulletin. However, hospitality is not just declaring “all are welcome.”

Consider this. Have you ever had a negative experience of hospitality? Maybe you were invited to a social gathering and everyone ignored you. Or perhaps you felt like you didn’t fit in or measure up. While it’s true you were invited and formally welcomed to the party, what you experienced felt more like hostility than hospitality.

Now think about a positive experience of hospitality. What made the experience wonderful?

Was it because there was lots of good food and beverages? Good food and beverages are delightful, but they are not essential to true hospitality. There was probably lots of good food at the party where everyone ignored you,

right? On the flip side, we’ve all experienced incredible hospitality over a hot dog or with no food at all. Food and beverages aren’t essential to good hospitality. Neither is entertainment, stimulating conversation or a nice house or backyard. As wonderful as these things are, none of them are essential to true hospitality.

When I reflect on what makes hospitality positive, it boils down to this: I felt comfortable being myself. I felt welcomed and accepted as I am. And this is no small matter. This kind of hospitality is a rare and precious gift. This is why people were drawn to Jesus. Because of how he made them feel. He made them feel accepted and loved as they were.

American poet Maya Angelou said, “People will forget what you said, forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

Godly hospitality is not simply opening up our homes or churches to people and saying they are welcome. True hospitality is not merely sharing our food, beverages or resources with others. True hospitality is making other people feel comfortable being themselves. Hospitality is opening ourselves to receive people as they are, moving us from our self-preoccupation, to paying attention to them, to who they really are: people made in the image of God. ✎



Troy Watson is a pastor of Avon Mennonite Church in Stratford, Ont.

VIEWPOINT

A peace pilgrimage that transcends borders

Andrew Suderman

Right relationships lie at the heart of biblical peace or shalom. Peace is not simply a state of being or a tranquil place. Rather, shalom arises when we relate rightly to one another, with creation and with God. It emerges out of relationships. It is a process, not a place.

Psalms 34:14b encourages us to “seek peace, and pursue it. . . .” It’s not just about finding peace. We must actively seek it out. This happens when we “depart from evil and do good” (Psalms 34:14a).

We’re given the impression that peace might not be easy to achieve. But the demand is unequivocal: we must chase it!

Psalms 85:10 says: “Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other.” Without justice (in Greek, the same word as righteousness), there will be no peace. Put differently, justice is an essential element in peace.

James 3:18 says: “And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.” The way one plants, matters. In this case, the fruit does not match the seed planted. The fruit of righteousness (or justice; these two are variations of the same word) comes from the way in which the seed is sown.

Just as justice is essential for peace, James suggests that the pursuit of justice must be done in peace for a fruit of righteousness to emerge.

Unfortunately, a quick glance through news articles highlights the fact that the world is not at peace. There is unrest as people come together to challenge the way in which their governing authorities are ruling; wars and violent conflicts endure; poverty, economic instability and exploitation continue to sow hopelessness, exacerbating scarcity.

Recognizing this lack of peace helps us understand why people feel the need to migrate.

The reality of migration touches us all.



MWC PHOTO BY ANDREW SUDERMAN

MWC commissions take action for peace as they pray for migrants who suffer injustice.

We may be the ones on the move, we may be supporting those who are on the move, or we may be the ones who benefit from the systems that cause people to take a perilous journey toward a more hopeful and dignified life.

News broadcasters and leaders too often describe this as an “immigration crisis.” Such a depiction, however, fails to recognize the injustice from which people want to escape. In other words, we fail to understand why people choose the dangerous journey to leave home in search of peace; we fail to recognize the forces that cause inhumane, undignified or violent realities people seek to escape.

As Christians, we are confronted with the reality that the one whom we follow—Jesus—was himself an immigrant and refugee. His parents fled the threat of death from Herod.

Forces of death continue to pursue people today. And as followers of the refugee Jesus, we, too, should be concerned with how to help others. In helping those who are fleeing, we help the Jesus who also was forced to flee!

The Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Peace Commission seeks to walk with, support and animate ways in which our member churches embody Christ’s peace in and for our world. This means finding ways to respond to the mechanisms of death that grip many around the world. It also means exploring how we might, consciously or unconsciously, participate in forces of injustice, oppres-

sion, exploitation and violence toward our own brothers and sisters.

To this end, the Peace Commission has been involved in:

- **Children on the move.** MWC has been part of a global faith consortium to help children who are migrating, and to mobilize faith communities to be centres of support.
- **Working with our Indigenous brothers and sisters.** Our most recent document, “Declaration of solidarity with Indigenous peoples,” approved in 2018, has been a helpful tool for our churches to explore, confess, and seek to repair the way in which our own history of migration has also caused, created or perpetuated new forms of injustice.
- **Conscientious objection.** We support our member churches whose governments require their young people to serve in the military. By request from our churches who struggle with this reality, we are drafting a document regarding conscientious objection that they can use in their particular struggles with their governing authorities.

As the Peace Commission, our hope is to support our churches throughout the world pursuing peace with justice, while stepping out of the cycle of violence that inevitably perpetuates death. In this way, we can hopefully demonstrate Christ’s way of peace through our witness of being pilgrims on a journey that transcends borders.

May God grant us the strength and courage to continue on this journey. ✎

Andrew Suderman, secretary of the MWC Peace Commission, serves as assistant professor of theology, peace and mission at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va.

WOMEN WALKING TOGETHER IN FAITH

Finding spiritual fruits in Mennonite orchards

By Ly Vang

When I was growing up on a farm in Laos, we planted our own fruits, and my parents always said, “Whenever you eat fruit that tastes good, save the seed so you can plant it. That way you will have more delicious fruit!”

When I was younger, my dad brought mangoes, tamarind and red guava seeds from Thailand. He planted them in old buckets and told me to water them daily. When the seedlings got bigger, we planted them in our backyard, and he promised that our fruit would be the best and sweetest, even before they fully ripened. I was very excited about those plants and held them close to my heart, hoping that one day I’d get to eat the fruit. Waiting was the hardest part!

In my spiritual journey, I’ve found many delicious fruits growing in the Mennonite community. In 1980, my family and many other Hmong refugees came to Canada, mostly sponsored by Mennonite churches. We didn’t know anything about the Mennonite people but, when we attended church services, we experienced love and comfort and felt warmly welcomed.

Some of these Hmong families were Christians before coming to Canada and started attending their sponsors’ churches. However, they didn’t understand the language, so they sought a place where they could worship in their own language. The Mennonite churches supported this idea and we were overjoyed when First Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont., opened up its building for us.

Worshipping in Hmong allowed us to enrich our hearts and to grow in faith, experiencing the joy of God’s love in our lives. I remembered that the first few months in Canada were hard for my parents. I’d often see them crying. But when we began worshipping God in our own

language with other Hmong people, their tears dried up. I saw smiles on their faces and life in their eyes.

Because we felt loved, listened to and supported at First Mennonite, we wanted to emulate the warmth, compassion and good faith in our own Hmong church, too. We found that the sweetest spiritual fruit had grown in the Mennonite communities, so we wanted to plant that seed in our backyard.

Now I can see that these seeds have grown fruit in us. In 2004, we saw the need of the Chin people from Burma who moved to Canada and needed a place of worship. We welcomed them to use our church building, just as our former

Mennonite hosts had done for us. We helped each other to better walk the journey of faith. Our communities have a good relationship and I’m very proud to see how they’ve grown in their own faith.

More recently, I discovered another exceptionally good fruit within Women of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, and I’d like to see this “tree” continue to bear fruit.

Like the story of Tabitha in Acts 9:36-43, I’d like to keep the story of their “good works and acts of charity” alive. Because I know from personal experience that when Mennonite women come together to sew and knot quilts for others in need, it’s incredible. The physical and spiritual gathering and sharing of faith is powerful. It changes our lives and challenges us to do better and root deeper into Christ.

I’d like to encourage all Mennonite women to continue to reach out and build each other up. Let’s share our fruits of faith with one another so we can grow stronger together. ❧



PHOTO COURTESY OF LY VANG

When Ly Vang was growing up on a farm in Laos, her family planted its own fruits, and her parents always said, ‘Whenever you eat fruit that tastes good, save the seed so you can plant it. That way you will have more delicious fruit!’

Ly Vang is married and has five children. She has been a member of First Hmong Mennonite Church for 38 years and has held many positions; currently she is on the prayer and missions team and teaches Sunday school.

After making its debut on Nov. 12, 2007, this is our final “Women walking together in faith” column. CM thanks the many women who authored columns over the years, and also Leona Dueck Penner, who has worked tirelessly behind the scenes shepherding the work along over the past 12 years.

NEWS

Imperilled world, imperfect choices

By Will Braun
Senior Writer

I interviewed five people who care about climate, yet, like many of us, they take actions not backed by their beliefs. I wanted to gently pull back the veil on the inner tensions with which many of us contend.

Some of the five I spoke with are decision-makers in sizeable organizations with ecological mandates. Some are Mennonite, some not. Two work internationally. Four are women, one a man. Canadian Mennonite has chosen not to identify them.

While this article addresses people who stress about climate, feel free to keep reading even if you are chilled about it. Please know I have examined the best arguments I could find among the climate sceptics. I was not ultimately convinced, except that climate activists are too often self-righteous.

Three of the five people I spoke with identified air travel as the key cause of enviro-angst.

For one, the waste stream from her home topped the list. The fifth said air angst is second to the stress of a recent purchase of a family vehicle large enough for tall teenagers and cheaper than the out-of-reach electric options.

One person flies about once a month. Another, about double that. Another, only once a year, as a concession to maintain family harmony. What goes into their decisions to fly?

The once-a-month flyer

mentioned the constant need to weigh a range of demands: family, the value of in-person contact for work relationships, and, always, time pressure. Ground is slower than sky. Trains are slow, infrequent, often off-schedule and expensive. More travel time means less home time with family and less work getting done.

One decision-maker spoke of not wanting to turn down an invitation from Indigenous leaders to be present at a significant event, and of the irreplaceable value of face-to-face contact when establishing relationships with collaborators in different places and cultures.

Another spoke of the difference between in-person and online board meetings: “I

can’t quantify it, but I can tell you that in-person meetings make a tremendous long-term difference to our relationships, and therefore to our ability to carry out our mandate. Once established, the relationships can be carried fairly well online, but you do need to come back together from time to time.”

In relation to personal travel, one person spoke about “the heart part”: “Sometimes the emotional pull to be present for significant times in the lives of distant family members trumps all.”

Most people noted the debate over personal action versus systemic change. Individual emission reductions are inconsequential—yet integrity is not—when



PHOTO © ISTOCK.COM/DON MENNIG

‘So I must state that, for all the good reasons to fly, there is one good reason not to: We’re cookin’ the place,’ states Will Braun, as rising sea levels and melting glaciers and icebergs attest.

working for broader change.

These people are not saying that pro-flying factors fully justify air travel, just that they are realities that cause stress and force tough decisions. They all have unresolved tension, like many of us. As one person freely confessed, “None of [the off-setting factors] really let me relax about this.”

How do these people process their guilt, fear, shame and paralysis, to use their words?

One person plants a tree for every thousand kilometres of air travel. Most spoke about integrity in other areas of their lives. Some said flying allows them to work on systemic change, again not claiming this as full justification.

One person said of her climate grief, “There are times when I shut it off. . . . I can’t think hard about it all the time.” Still, she believes, “we need to lean into the emotions,” by talking about them and processing them.

“I am worried that the angst can immobilize us, because the level of imperfection is so high,” one person shared. “So I have been trying as much as possible to say

to myself, ‘How can my feelings shift my behaviour, even if it is just an incremental shift? . . . If I can’t stop flying, can I reduce it?’”

One person spoke of the value of reaching for any relational or spiritual resources available, including contemplative practices, to avoid paralysis and brokenness.

One person said, in relation to the weight of her seemingly unavoidable—although fastidiously minimized—contribution to the landfills that will stand as lasting monuments to our society’s excess, “There is just an acceptance. . . . I just live with angst.” Perhaps that is the price of our First-World existence.

The danger in writing this article is that I just offer more tools for readers to add to their justification kits. So I must state that, for all the good reasons to fly, there is one good reason not to: We’re cookin’ the place. My point is not to judge the justifications, although it is tempting. My point is that there is value in talking candidly, collectively and compassionately about tough decisions and the angst they bring. ॥



Jan Joyce works in a home in Grand Forks, B.C., damaged by the 2018 flood.

Volunteers needed this fall

Mennonite Disaster Service has an urgent need for volunteers this fall, due to a rise in natural disasters and weather delays this spring. We need weekly volunteers in Texas, South Dakota, California and more.

We are grateful for the opportunity to serve a greater number of disaster survivors this season. “Join us in our ambitious endeavor to bring home more people.

To Volunteer
Call 1-800-241-811
mds.mennonite.net

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Planting trees, nurturing a dream

Retired couple reflects on nearly 40 years of preserving nature

Story and Photos by Donna Schulz
Saskatchewan Correspondent
DUCK LAKE, SASK.

As they walk the length of their 32-hectare (80-acre) property, it is evident that Wayne and Carry Dueck share a deep love for the place they simply call The Land.

In 1981, Wayne was serving on the board of directors of Native Ministries in what was then the Conference of Mennonites in Canada. While attending a board meeting in Rosthern, Sask., he glanced through a copy of the local weekly newspaper and spotted an advertisement that read: "Land for Sale, 80 acres." The ad included a Duck Lake telephone number.

"I called purely on impulse, remembering that I'd often commented to Carry that,

as a first-generation urbanite, it would be a dream-come-true to own a piece of land other than the small residential lot [we] owned in . . . Saskatoon," says Wayne.

He met the owner at the property that evening. "We sat on the end gate of his truck," he recalls. "Sandhill cranes circled overhead. A Swainson's hawk screamed off in the distance. Coyotes antiphonally sang to the east and to the west. It seemed so peaceful and quiet."

It didn't take Wayne long to decide to buy the property. Then he found a pay phone in Duck Lake and called his wife. "I asked Carry how she felt about my buying 80 acres of non-productive farmland," he

says. She was enthusiastic.

The property, located about 11 kilometres west and four kilometres north of Duck Lake, was home to mature spruce and trembling aspen trees. Diamond willow brush surrounded a 1.5-hectare slough at the north end of the property. Chokecherry, saskatoon berry and wolf



Wayne Dueck examines a burr oak tree he planted in the late 1990s. He expects that, if the tree survives, it may outlive many of the surrounding conifers.



willow bushes grew along the eastern border.

The Duecks wanted the property to remain in its natural state. But they also wanted to add trees.

"I decided that soil conditions were perfect, with a bit of help from Mother Nature, to grow coniferous trees," says Wayne.

In 1986, he planted 10,000 white spruce and Scots pine trees. He planted another 10,000 seedlings the next year. In the years that followed, Wayne and his sons Colin and Greg, along with many friends, planted even more trees, bringing the grand total to 38,001 coniferous trees by 2014.

"I saw Wayne as a man who was passionate about planting trees," says Carry. "The joy of seeing them planted and then grow was a gift to all who came to visit."

Alluding to the allegorical tale, *The Man Who Planted Trees*, by Jean Giorno, Carry says, “The man [in the story] became a major inspiration for the idea of planting trees as a route to reparation, a way of making amends for the damage we have dealt to the natural world.”

Today Wayne estimates that some 10,000 second-growth conifers, some of them 2.5 metres tall, have sprouted from the ones he planted.

Wildflowers and fruit also thrive in this protected space. Prairie lilies, brown-eyed susans and wild roses flourish, as do wild strawberries, saskatoons and chokecherries.

Animal life, too, is abundant on The Land. The Duecks have spotted deer, elk,



Wayne Dueck admires how the Scots pine trees he planted more than 30 years ago have grown and proliferated over time.

LEFT: Wayne and Carry Dueck wander through the trees on the property they call The Land..

RIGHT: The names on this cedar shake will disappear with time, and the marker itself may disappear, as deer seem to find them tasty, says Wayne Dueck.



brown bears, porcupines, squirrels and many species of birds over the years.

The Land was a special place for the Duecks when their sons were growing up. They spent summers camping on the property and hosted their sons' birthday parties there.

“Over the years, several hundred individuals and many groups have spent time with Carry and me at The Land,” says Wayne. “For many, being so close to nature was a new experience.”

One group that spent time on The Land was Saskatoon's Nutana Park Mennonite Church, Wayne and Carry's faith community. On more than one occasion, the congregation enjoyed church picnics and Sunday afternoon *faspas* at the Duecks' property.

The Land provided Wayne and Carry

with many teaching opportunities. They delighted in seeing children peer into blue-bird nesting boxes, climb trees, and listen, often for the first time, to coyotes singing.

He recalls family and friends playing baseball “using a bat carved from a poplar tree,” roasting wieners and sipping hot chocolate on cool fall evenings, and telling progressive stories around the campfire.

The Land allowed the Duecks “to create a place where many individuals and groups could experience each other and God's nature in positive and engaging ways,” says Wayne. It has been “the near perfect environment to teach and demonstrate

love, kindness, understanding, tolerance and forgiveness,” he adds.

These days, the Duecks live in Kelowna, B.C., near son Greg and his family. But they return to The Land whenever they can, marvelling at the growth of the trees, noting what has changed and what remains the same.

“The Land was considered agriculturally unproductive,” says Carry, “but, in fact, it was a huge gift of life.” ❧

For more photos of The Land, visit canadianmennonite.org/the-land.



Vegetables harvested, soup's on

Church garden provides produce for soup kitchen

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe

Manitoba Correspondent

STEINBACH, MAN.

In the summer of 2004, Joy Neufeld opened the first soup kitchen in Steinbach. Fifteen years later, Soup's On is still serving its community and is thriving.

Neufeld, a member of Grace Mennonite Church in Steinbach, started the project because she loved working in the kitchen. "I just love cooking and baking, but the last thing Steinbach needed was another restaurant," she says.

What she did see was a growing need to address poverty in her city. "I happened to work for an organization at the time, where I frequently saw people in

poverty," she says, which led her to do some research and visit organizations like Agape House and Anna's House in Steinbach that provided assistance to people in need. She discovered that the people on the frontlines were saying over and over that there was a need for a soup kitchen in Steinbach. "We are a city; we have all the problems and concerns other cities have," she says.

"I felt God calling me to help," Neufeld says. "I just thought, this is it, this is the answer."

Grace Mennonite donated the use of

its basement and kitchen, so she didn't have to start from scratch. The church is a major support to the project, since Soup's On doesn't have to pay for any expenses like rent or water. "They are as gracious as their name," Neufeld says.

But the church wouldn't have enough resources or energy to run the project on its own, she says. It is also very much an effort of the whole community.

Soup's On provides free suppers every Tuesday and Friday, serving from 40 people to as many as 80 per meal. Neufeld says the number fluctuates so much that it's difficult to predict, so she just tries to be prepared and adjust accordingly to last-minute changes. The soup kitchen also provides breakfast and lunch programs for schools in the Steinbach area.

A few years after Soup's On began, Grace Mennonite started another project of its own: a garden. A tangle of vegetables soon sprang up beside the church and has been returning consistently every summer for about a decade.

A group of about eight congregants help with the garden, gathering every Tuesday evening to work. A couple rows of beds, about three metres long and two metres wide, provide vegetables that are given to the Soup's On kitchen.

Although the garden was not Neufeld's idea, and she is not involved in its care, the garden team consults with her every spring to see what vegetables will be most useful in the soup kitchen. Team members then grow, harvest, prepare and deliver the vegetables to her kitchen.

"I am just the lucky recipient of all that produce," she says. "It's a tremendous program, the garden. It's an amazing help."

This summer, the garden produced cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers, onions, potatoes, radishes and carrots. It also has rhubarb, a cherry plum tree, a few apple



PHOTO BY LARRY FRIESEN

The garden at Grace Mennonite Church in Steinbach, Man., donates its produce to the local soup kitchen, Soup's On.

trees and grapevines. Last year, the garden team made about nine litres of grape juice, which the church used for communion.

Despite having to relocate the garden, due to church renovations, it grew well this summer, says Larry Friesen, garden coordinator and a member of Grace Mennonite. It was a dry summer but, thanks to the church's irrigation system, the plants are now gorgeous.

Once a week, kneeling in the damp soil picking weeds and nurturing the fledgling plants, congregants have an opportunity to share updates on their lives and connect with each other. "For us, it's a bit of a fellowship more than anything," Friesen says. They have wiener roasts and share snacks together occasionally, and usually end the season with a harvest potluck supper.

But the most rewarding part of it all is seeing the patrons of Soup's On enjoy the vegetables, says Friesen, who sometimes volunteers in the kitchen.

Neufeld's cucumber and tomato salad is a favourite among the diners, and she always hears appreciative comments about the fresh vegetables. "Any time you can have fresh vegetables out of a garden is a benefit," says Friesen.

The garden requires only about an hour of work once a week, which is a small investment for the reward that comes as a result, says Friesen. "To see people enjoy what Joy will put out, and come back for seconds and thirds, or give her a hug or a thank you after a meal, it's worth everything we do there."

Soup's On has become a community of soup kitchen diners, volunteers, congregants and people from the neighbourhood. "This soup kitchen has turned out to be something more than just people living in poverty coming to have a meal," says Neufeld. "This is people living in poverty coming to have a meal and realizing there's a community that cares about them. I've had guests come and tell me, literally with tears in their eyes, 'I know people care about me.' It's amazing." ❧

To view more photos, visit canadianmennonite.org/soups-on.



'Growing smaller together'

Rearranging pews a symbol of deeper discernment

By Janet Bauman
Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

In what church member Karl Dick calls a "bold summer experiment," the congregation at Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church decided to unscrew some of its hardwood benches and re-arrange them in "a more communal" way.

While it took less than an hour to angle some pews toward each other, facing a central space, Pastor Ben Cassels says many people were "caught off guard" by how the change has impacted this nearly 100-year-old congregation that worships in a 19th century Presbyterian sanctuary.

For several years, the congregation has been in an intentional process of discernment about its identity. Rearranging the pews was a tangible symbol of a much deeper process.

Like many churches, Waterloo-Kitchener faced declining attendance and an aging demographic. Leaders and congregants explored several options, including mergers with other congregations, but they decided they still liked being together. That meant facing up to their reality. Instead of assuming something was wrong and needed fixing, the church began to "embrace what it means to be a small church," says Cassels, adding that being honest about the life stage of the church has been "an incredible gift."

It can be easy to lose hope, and people need time to mourn what is past. But it is also an opportunity to explore what it means to be the church. Our "vision for now" is to be "intentionally small," he says.

For the month of August, the congregation worshipped in the rearranged space, focussing on building community around a shared table. In the centre of the worship space, a table was filled with food to share: cinnamon buns one week, *rollkuchen* and watermelon another week. One person



PHOTO BY KARL DICK

The Waterloo-Kitchener United Church congregation rearranged its sanctuary in a more communal way around a central space. The church's summer theme was 'Building community around a shared table' with food to share at the end of each service.

described it as "liturgical brunch."

The pew changes mean people sit closer together and can look each other in the eye. Their singing improved because they could hear each other better. Children's time happened in the centre of the worship space, surrounded by everyone else. Sharing communion around the fellowship table was particularly meaningful. People were moved to tears by the experiences of intimacy and community.

Some people were uncomfortable with the change at first, but many came to see the "life-giving aspect" of it, says Cassels. According to him, there is a "renewed sense of enthusiasm and energy." Leaders have a new sense of hope and permission to dream and be creative. "The imagination gets going," he says.

For now, the church will keep meeting this way. It will take time this fall to evaluate the shift and continue discerning what "growing smaller together" means. ❧

Duet bikes an opportunity for young and old to connect

By Rachel Bergen
Contributing Editor

People walking around Abbotsford, B.C.'s Mill Lake might have caught an odd sight of seniors riding on duet bikes this summer.

Duet bikes are wheelchair tandem bikes that enable people who have little mobility to get pedalled around by someone who has that ability.

"It's like a rickshaw in reverse," explains Dale Carlisle, a rehabilitation assistant for Menno Place, which offers independent and assisted living seniors housing, as well as long-term care.

Menno Place was given a donation earmarked for an activity to improve the quality of life of its residents, Joanne Sweeney, the recreation and volunteer manager, says. In 2018, the team decided to buy a duet bike and look into how the time outdoors and spending time with other people improved the mental health of its residents. Menno Place bought another bike this year.

Cutting-edge research on the mental-health benefits of a duet bike was done for the first time in Canada at Menno Place, Sweeney says. The initial research was completed in August in conjunction with the B.C. Patient Safety and Quality Council, led by Victor Kang, a medical school student from McGill University in Montréal. Preliminary evidence shows

there is a reduction in depression for those who score in the moderate range of the geriatric depression scale.

"We had one woman who participated in 16 activities in four months," Sweeney says. "After using the duet bike, she participated in 17 activities in just six weeks. She's now coming out of her room more, and she's sitting at the table with other women she met riding the duet bikes."

Part of the benefits of the program come from being outside, the seniors say.

"It's amazing to see some of the smiles on the faces of the residents going out," Sweeney says. "Some of them haven't been on a bike in 60 years."

Carlisle adds that it's an opportunity for the seniors to forget they're in care.

"It's great to see the residents let their hair down, relax and just enjoy nature," he says.

Relationship-building through biking

Carlisle says the program also promotes relationship-building. "Part of it is the communication between the resident and the volunteer. You talk about everything you see, so it's a good social activity," he says.

That's been Emily Pfannschmidt's experience. She has been working at Menno

Hospital, helping in recreation and rehabilitation since last February and has worked in the duet bike program for the last three months.

"I try to make it as therapeutic as possible, so we're talking with them, singing with them and trying to make sure they enjoyed the ride," she says.

She gets a lot of out of working in the program. "It's very rewarding for me just to see how the bike ride impacted the folks that went on them. If they were hesitant to come, afterwards they'd say how much they enjoyed the ride and wanted to go again," she says. "I felt the sense that I was helping someone and that I was making a positive impact on their lives."

Those involved say the program is a good way to bring the residents together with younger people for a mutually beneficial interaction.

"I think it's important for an intergenerational program," Sweeney says. "There's a lot of things the youth can learn from seniors and a lot of things the seniors can learn from youth."

Moving forward, she hopes that other care facilities and programs for people with disabilities will purchase duet bikes.

"We want to start a community riding club," she says. ☘



Menno Place volunteers take two residents out for a ride on duet bikes.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MENNO PLACE

'The places that moved me'

Museum exhibit features professor's paintings of historic Anabaptist sites

By Amy Rinner Waddell

B.C. Correspondent

Abbotsford, B.C.

A love for the arts, combined with an interest in Anabaptist history, has inspired a professor at Columbia Bible College in Abbotsford to create paintings depicting early Anabaptist history. The exhibit of Gareth Brandt's water-colour paintings, "Stories of the Anabaptists," was introduced Sept. 11 at the Mennonite Heritage Museum in Abbotsford.

Brandt said that he has always enjoyed being creative through writing, visual arts and sculpture, but in adulthood some of those creative outlets took a backseat to family and career responsibilities.

"A few years ago, a traumatic event in my life triggered my anxiety and depression, and I had to take a partial medical leave," he says. "One of my therapeutic activities was taking up watercolour painting after more than 20 years of dormancy."

His therapist had suggested doing Sudoku puzzles, but Brandt admits that he doesn't care for numbers, so he turned to painting because "it slows me down."



MENNONITE HERITAGE MUSEUM PHOTO

BY JULIA TOEWS

Gareth Brandt, an Anabaptist history professor at Columbia Bible College, stands beside 'Strassbourg,' one of his 'simple folk art' works at the Mennonite Heritage Museum, where his 'Stories of the Anabaptists' collection is on display until Nov. 1.

A professor of spiritual formation at Columbia, Brandt teaches Anabaptist history and thought. His visits to European sites central to 16th-century Anabaptist history inspired this collection of artwork. He says the medium of water-colour painting was especially appropriate because "the central act of the movement was believer's water baptism."

The collection was a year in the making, with Brandt working from his own photographs. Of the images he chose to reproduce on canvas, he says they were "the places that moved me."

The sites depicted include the presumed site of the first Anabaptist baptism and martyrdom in Zurich, Switzerland; the church in Pingjum, the Netherlands, where Menno Simons had been a priest; and the site of the Anabaptist uprising in Münster, Germany.

Brandt describes his style as "simple folk art" in keeping with the Anabaptist value of simplicity.

The "Stories of the Anabaptists" collection is on display at Mennonite Heritage Museum until Nov. 1. ☞



PHOTO BY AMY RINNER WADDELL

Patrons at Mennonite Heritage Museum view the paintings of Gareth Brandt depicting 'Stories of the Anabaptists' that are on display through Nov. 1.

MMI golf tournament aids Edmonton Mennonite Guest Home rebuild

By Joanne De Jong
Alberta Correspondent
EDMONTON

Mennonite Mutual Insurance (MMI) in Alberta had its first-ever golf tournament fundraiser at the Eagle Rock Golf Course in Leduc County, just south of Edmonton, on Sept. 7. Chosen as its beneficiary was the Edmonton Mennonite Guest Home that provides short-term residential accommodation for patients and families of patients being treated in Edmonton's medical facilities.

The Guest Home group, which has two properties in south Edmonton, is a wholly owned non-profit subsidiary of the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite (Holdeman), which has guest homes around the world. In Canada, it also has guest homes in London, Ont., and Halifax.

Marguerite Jack, MMI's constituency relations representative and a member of Calgary First Mennonite Church, initially didn't know much about the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite, but she was soon impressed with what it was doing

and wanted to help. Hence, the golf tournament.

The Guest Home group purchased both houses in 2000, and they have been going strong ever since. According to Isaac Curtis, a Church of God volunteer, on average the houses are 90 percent full, serving about 200 guests a month, evenly split between patients and their family members.

This non-profit initiative is funded by church members, but fundraising was needed when one house on 117 Street, across from the Cross Cancer Institute, needed to be rebuilt.

When the Guest Home group first bought the homes, it approached the City



PHOTO BY BRIAN LADD

The Edmonton Mennonite Guest Home, a non-profit subsidiary of the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite (Holdeman), is rebuilding one of its two houses in south Edmonton. Completion is expected to be in the spring of 2020.

of Edmonton, which supported the project since there was a big need at the time for affordable accommodation for medical patients and their families. Nothing was put in writing, though, and 16 years later a neighbour complained. The Guest Home group applied for rezoning of the property and its proposal was accepted, but a number of upgrades were required.

The group determined, though, that it was more cost-effective to rebuild the house, and, although church members were a little nostalgic and worried about the new building feeling like an institution instead of a home, they agreed to move forward. The layout offers eight guest rooms, each with its own bathroom. An elevator will make the new house more wheelchair accessible, and the new kitchen will meet all Alberta health standards.

The golf tournament, which included many Mennonites, raised \$10,000 for the Edmonton Mennonite Guest Home. ▮



PHOTO BY MARGUERITE JACK

Pictured from left to right: Rudy Koop; Garth Wideman and Dave Lefever, both of Holyrood Mennonite, Edmonton; and Herman Neufeld of Edmonton First Mennonite, formed a team to raise money for the Edmonton Mennonite Guest Home at the first-ever MMI golf tournament in September.

Move to Canadian office 'a blessing'

MWC general secretary César Garcia excited about what we can do together

Story and Photo by Janet Bauman
Eastern Canada Correspondent
KITCHENER, ONT.

For César Garcia, general secretary of Mennonite World Conference (MWC), relocating to office space in Kitchener has “been a blessing.” He shares the office with four staff, some of the 40 people who work and volunteer for MWC around the world. MWC shares space at 50 Kent Avenue with staff from a variety of other Anabaptist related organizations.

When Garcia began as general secretary in 2012, he was the first person from the Global South to hold the position. The head office of MWC moved from Strasbourg, France, to Bogotá, Colombia, where he lived at the time, to reflect that shift. But in February of 2019, the head office moved again, this time to Kitchener.

Garcia sensed that people in Colombia did not perceive his move to Canada as a negative thing. He sees MWC as having a “mobile office.” It has moved before and likely will again.

The move gives him easier access to a larger portion of the Anabaptist constituency and brings him closer to frequent flight paths, simplifying travel, which represents 50 percent of his work. It is a healthier arrangement for him and his family. He is joined in Kitchener by his wife Sandra, who works part-time in the MWC office. They have two young adult daughters.

For Garcia, it has “been very special” to work out of offices shared with so many agencies that are part of the global Anabaptist church.

He says it is a shame that there is a tendency in Anabaptist DNA to divide over non-negotiables, leading to fragmentation, duplication and competition. “We need to work against that part of ourselves,” he says. “Unity is a gift of the Holy Spirit . . . we live out with love



César Garcia, general secretary of Mennonite World Conference is pictured in his Kitchener, Ont., office, where he has been working for the past seven months.

and patience.”

It is the living out of that unity that excites him most. He acknowledges that many things

can be divisive, but when Anabaptists focus on following Jesus in a ministry of reconciliation, love and peace, it is special to see what can be done.

For Garcia, MWC, which will be 100 years old in 2025, is “like a local congregation on a global scale.” Instead of being perceived as another agency or partner “competing for attention,” he wants MWC to encourage all Anabaptist organizations to share their resources and experiences.

He cites the MWC General Council meetings in Kenya as an example of the “impact that our churches have when we are working together.” It was so valuable for church leaders who don’t have the possibility of seminary training to gather and learn practical things like how to lead a meeting, solve conflicts, arrive at a consensus and do strategic planning.

Looking ahead, Garcia will be busy helping to plan the next MWC assembly in Indonesia in 2021. Another part of his work is supporting churches living with persecution or facing the devastation of a natural disaster. In responding to suffering, he says it is so important for agencies to work well together.

For Garcia and his wife, moving to Kitchener seven months ago did feel like “starting from zero.” Furnace filters, water softeners and snow shovelling were new. The cost of living is high in Canada, and there was a lot of legal documentation required. But they were moved by the welcome they received from their neighbours.

They have visited Mennonite, Mennonite Brethren and Be in Christ churches, and are looking to find a church home in the area. ❧

'A practicum in homelessness'

MCC program shares 'tools' to combat homelessness

By Joelle Kidd

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
TORONTO

In 2013, the first cast of Canadian sculptor Timothy Schmalz's "Homeless Jesus" was installed. The bronze statue, which depicts the Christ figure as a person sleeping on a park bench, was offered to two churches before being installed at Regis College at the University of Toronto.

When Pete Olsen, coordinator of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Toronto Ontario Opportunity for Learning and Service (TOOLS) program, takes groups completing the program to see the statue, he says they talk about the image of Jesus that it presents. What one thinks of the statue, he says, is "really critical to who you think Jesus is."

Jesus identified with homeless people, Olsen says, quoting from the gospels: "*Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head*" (Matthew 8:20). "He said, 'When you do this for them, you do it for me,'" says Olsen, adding, "What more motivation do we need?"

Olsen, 64, has been running TOOLS for the past seven-and-a-half years.

Building on years of working with youth and with inner-city mission, he revamped the program to focus less on theoretical, classroom learning and more on practical experience. The concept is less in the vein of a short-term mission trip and more like an MCC learning tour translated to the urban environment.

Over the course of a weekend, teams of young people, usually youth or high school groups or young adults, come to the city to experience what homelessness looks like and what organizations are doing to help.

The typical schedule includes a prayer walk covering downtown Toronto, volunteer opportunities with local shelters and soup kitchens, and a guided street walk with speaker Patrick Sullivan, who shares his own story of homelessness as a teen. Groups also participate in experiential activities, like breaking into small groups to meet and talk with homeless people, or to explore Toronto through the eyes of someone who doesn't have housing, trying to imagine where one would sleep, get money, find entertainment or food.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF PETE OLSEN

A group of TOOLS participants talk with a homeless person at Yonge-Dundas Square in downtown Toronto.



TOOLS coordinator Pete Olsen sits next to the 'Homeless Jesus' statue.

"It's like a practicum in homelessness," says Olsen. "As I say at the end, you're leaving the city, and you didn't make a difference. But we hope that Toronto made a difference in you."

Olsen, who currently works 0.4 time on the TOOLS program, is beginning a transition into retirement. A new hire, a former youth pastor hired after an exceptionally busy spring, will take over for Olsen by October 2020.

Olsen says he loves seeing young people

fired up about issues of poverty, and the new skills they cultivate during the program. He is especially gratified to see young people learning to talk with people who are panhandling on the street and connect with them on a human level.

The job is one that can be “super fulfilling,” when he sees how excited groups become about alleviating poverty, Olsen says, but, at the same time, it can be heart-breaking to witness so closely the hardships of homelessness. When he hears friends or acquaintances talking about homeless people as a problem or a nuisance, the “justice warrior” in him comes out, he says. “You’re talking about people who are homeless; I’m talking about Joe or Heather, people who have a story.”

There are many misconceptions that people bring to the issue, he says. For one, Olsen maintains that providing housing for everyone in the country would be cheaper than funding the services that become more overstretched as homelessness becomes more pronounced—from policing and court costs, to jail and health care.

Other misinformation, like the idea that panhandlers are secretly rich, can allow people an excuse not to engage. “We can easily come up with excuses not to help

people,” says Olsen, “but we have to step past our own selfish humanity and remember what Jesus did.”

To do better, Olsen says Christians need to care. It was hard for him to realize that within all the teams of people that came from churches, very few had ever spoken with a homeless person before. “I ache to see the body of Christ engaged,” he says.

A good first step is to begin engaging with people face-to-face, he says. “Take a moment and say ‘hello.’” He suggests packing some items to give out: a toothbrush, toothpaste, gift cards, small bills, socks, or soft edible items like fruit or candy. “Exchange names, shake their hand. Let them know that they’re not invisible. Let them know that you see them.”

Olsen also recommends that people connect with agencies that work with homelessness in their area. “Keep it simple,” he says. “Don’t go and [try to] save the world. Look after one or two people. There [are] enough people in our pews to make a significant difference. We need to get Mennonite about this!” ❧

For more information about the TOOLS program, visit mcctools.net.



❧ Staff changes

Pastoral transitions in Alberta

• **Mezgebu A. Tucho**, the evangelist and pastor of the Bethel International Church Edmonton-Oromo Congregation, had his ordination transferred from the Evangelical Association of Canada to Mennonite Church Alberta on July 28. Tucho earned a doctorate in conflict transformation from IICM Bible College and Theological Seminary. At the same service, **Befikadu Shigut** was licensed towards ordination in recognition of his role as assistant pastor.



PHOTO BY JOANNE DE JONG

Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, MC Alberta's executive minister, second from right, leads the Bethel International Church Edmonton-Oromo Congregation in a liturgy of affirmation and commitment in the celebration of credentialing its pastors, Befikadu Shigut, left, and Mezgebu A. Tucho, second from left. Pastor Werner De Jong, right, from the MC Alberta congregation and leadership committee, was also present.



• **Donna Dinsmore** began an 18-month term as intentional transitional pastor of Foothills Mennonite Church, Calgary, on July 1. She is an ordained United Church of Canada minister, who most recently served as interim pastor for two years at Edmonton First Mennonite Church. She has a master's degree in Christian studies from Regent College in Vancouver, as well as a master's degree in music education from the University of Illinois.

—BY JOANNE DE JONG

❧ Briefly noted

Young writer making waves in literary world

Sarah Ens has been earning one award after another for her writing, affirming the skills she has been honing since junior high. She recently won first place in *The New Quarterly's* Edna Staebler Personal Essay Contest for her essay, “Entangled,” which tells the story of getting a Brazilian wax for the first time. Also in 2019, she placed second in *Contemporary Verse 2's* Two-Day Poem Contest for “Vermiculture,” a poem that she describes as “an attempt to face up to the human-created climate crisis while also seeking some kind of redemption or resurrection.” In the fall of 2018, she earned another first-place award in *Room Magazine's* Short Forms Contest for her poem, “Fan fiction for the revolution.” “It is completely humbling and gratifying,” says Ens, who hails from Landmark, Man., grew up attending Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, and is currently in her final year of a master's program in creative writing at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. “You work so hard and accrue so many rejection letters, to have someone tell you ‘Hey, we thought this was good,’ is simultaneously confidence-building and surreal!” Ens has recently been inspired by ideas around birds, climate justice and memory, both of body and place. She describes her thesis project as “a prairie long poem focusing on both human and ornithological migration.” Ens's debut collection of poetry, entitled *The World Is Mostly Sky*, is forthcoming from Turnstone Press next spring.

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE



'It just feels right'

Non-binary and trans Mennonites reflect on their pronouns

By Rachel Bergen
Contributing Editor

Many people have never questioned the gender norms they grew up with because it always rang true with how they felt inside.

That's not the case for some.

Jesse Wolfe grew up attending Foot-hills Mennonite Church in Calgary and attended Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg. Wolfe came out as non-binary only a couple of years ago.

Wolfe uses they/them pronouns because Wolfe's gender identity doesn't fit within the gender binary.* Rather, it's somewhere along the gender spectrum.

Wolfe remembers getting married to Selenna. A few weeks beforehand, not being sure what to wear or how to look for the big day, Wolfe decided to get a haircut and began browsing for suits that would fit Wolfe's sense of self.

"That was a huge turning point. I was finally expressing myself in the way I've always wanted to, but not felt comfortable doing so," Wolfe says.

Wolfe is pursuing hormone therapy in order to look more in line with Wolfe's sense of self. Although Wolfe is hoping to look more masculine, Wolfe doesn't necessarily feel masculine on an emotional level.

"When I dress in the morning and I imagine how I'm looking, it feels better than when I'm looking in the mirror at how I look," Wolfe says. "The social aspects of being a female, I love. I love the stereotypical wine nights with the girls, but, in terms of the body and physical aspects, I have a hard time. The thought of looking more masculine feels right."

Kelsey Van Dyke, a transgender person who uses he/him pronouns, grew up attending Nutana Park Mennonite Church in Saskatoon and graduated from CMU in 2013.

Van Dyke says the process of coming to terms with his gender identity was difficult. "I would say I identify more with the



PHOTO BY CAROLINE WINTONIW
Jesse Wolfe

masculine, which is why I chose he/him pronouns, but a lot of that is to make it easier for people to understand," he says. "I felt a lot of pressure to choose one or the other. There are parts of me where I still want to explore my femininity."

Church is a scary place

For many trans and non-binary people, the church is a place where people don't understand them.

"I avoid church because it's an extremely vulnerable place," says Wolfe, who sometimes goes and sits in the back, leaving as soon as the service is over.

That's, in part, a logistical thing. There is no washroom for people who don't

identify as either a man or a woman.

"I don't drink any coffee or water, so I don't have to pee until I know I can find a safe washroom," Wolfe says. There have been times in public where Wolfe goes into the women's washroom and people actively stare and leave. "That's absolutely terrifying for me," Wolfe says.

Wolfe says the service is the easiest part of church. In the times before and after church, people approach Wolfe and want to talk, but in those times they tend to "misgender" Wolfe.

"Especially before and after the service are very vulnerable," Wolfe says. "Everyone knows me as Kim and Byron Thiessen's daughter, and that's that. It's going to be a hard road to eventually change that."

For Wolfe, when people use they/them pronouns, that's an incredible experience, saying, "I get overwhelming joy when people refer to me as that."

Van Dyke says he is apprehensive about going to church, even though he grew



PHOTO COURTESY OF KELSEY VAN DYKE
Kelsey Van Dyke

Key terms

- **Cisgender:** When people's assigned sex and gender identity are the same.
- **Gender:** The social status and set of expectations from society about behaviours, characteristics and thoughts. How people are expected to act because of their sex.
- **Gender identity:** How people feel inside and how they express those feelings. Clothing, appearance and behaviours are all ways of expressing gender identity.
- **Non-binary:** An umbrella term that covers any gender identity that doesn't fit within the gender binary (man or woman) but somewhere along the gender spectrum.
- **Sex:** A label of male or female people are assigned by a doctor at birth based on the genitals they are born with and the chromosomes they have.
- **Transgender:** Some people feel the sex they were assigned at birth doesn't match their gender identity. The term is sometimes shortened to trans.

up in one. “You just have your guard up,” he says. “You assume everyone might be judging you or have a negative opinion of you. It’s easier to just avoid those spaces.”

His own experience with the church has been a mix. “There are people who want to get to know me, to adapt their life and their language to support me,” he says. “But there are others who are in complete denial about it and don’t want to accommodate anything, really. The people I interact with who are not supportive go with what they know and what they’re used to, so they use female pronouns. It feels like a punch to the gut.”

Van Dyke moved from Saskatoon to Kelowna, B.C., shortly after he started his transition. “People who didn’t know me were referring to me by my chosen pronoun without me even telling them. For me, that was empowering to be validated in that way,” he says.

Just ask

Wolfe and Van Dyke want people in the church to know it is okay to ask what their pronouns are. In fact, the two would rather that people ask than guess and get it wrong.

“It’s important to recognize language changes with social change and political change. That’s what’s going on right now,” Van Dyke says. He knows it is difficult to transition from using gendered pronouns to they/them/their pronouns, or from she/her to he/him pronouns, but what matters is the effort.

Wolfe appreciates it when people make the effort to use Wolfe’s chosen pronouns; however, it is hard to hear when people start to say the wrong one. “I mean, I appreciate it, you’re doing really great, but it’s also, like, now everyone knows,” Wolfe says.

Wolfe and Van Dyke hope for the day when there is a greater understanding of the gender spectrum as well as the physical and emotional aspects of it. ❧

** In order to avoid grammatical confusion, Canadian Mennonite does not use the plural pronouns they/them for a named individual.*

❧ Staff change

Boshart next AMBS president despite expressed concerns



• **David W. Boshart**, PhD, of Wellman, Iowa, has been appointed the next president of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), Elkhart, Ind., effective Jan. 1, 2020, following a period of “extended discernment” that included “outreach to and listening sessions with the AMBS community,” according to board chair Bruce Baergen of Edmonton. Boshart succeeds Sara Wenger Shenk, who retired on June 30 after nine years as president. Since 2010, Boshart has served as executive conference minister for Central Plains Mennonite Conference of Mennonite Church U.S.A. Prior to Central Plains, he served as a pastor for more than 25 years in Mennonite congregations in Iowa and Virginia. Boshart has a doctorate in leadership studies with an emphasis in missional theology from the School of Education at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Mich. He also earned degrees from Eastern Mennonite Seminary and Eastern Mennonite College (now University), both in Harrisonburg, Va. Boshart also will bring to his new role his experiences of serving in volunteer leadership roles across the Mennonite church; in July, he completed a two-year term as moderator of MC U.S.A. (2017-19), having served on the denomination’s Executive Board since 2007 and on the Board’s executive committee since 2008. He was a member of the AMBS board of directors (1999-2007), serving as chair (2003-05). Boshart’s traditional theological leanings and credentials have been called into question by at least four women on social media and the Into Account website (intoaccount.org) since the announcement, citing his views on dealing with sexual abuse survivors, same-sex marriage and the inclusion of LGBTQ+ people as reasons for opposing his appointment. They also lament that they feel their concerns were not sufficiently taken into account by AMBS during the hiring process that included the use of an outside consulting firm. On Sept. 20, AMBS posted a statement from Baergen responding to the “extended discernment” process; it can be read at bit.ly/ambbs-sept-20-response.

—BY ROSS W. MUIR, WITH FILES FROM AMBS AND INTO ACCOUNT

❧ News brief

Burkinabé pastor visits Witness supporters in Canada

When Tany Warkentin heard that her old friend, Calixte Bananzaro, pastor of the Ouagadougou Mennonite Church in Burkina Faso, pictured at right, was going to Goshen (Ind.) College for a conference, she immediately invited him to come to Canada to re-connect with friends and supporters. Doug Klassen, now Mennonite Church Canada’s executive director and former pastor of Foothills Mennonite Church in Edmonton, helped organize the trip, which involved Bananzaro preaching this summer at North Leamington United Mennonite Church in Leamington, Ont., and Foothills Mennonite, and speaking at a midweek meeting at Springridge Mennonite Church in Pincher Creek, Alta. Warkentin, who formerly served as an MC Canada Witness worker in Burkina Faso, says: “We can really benefit from the gifts and strengths that are lacking in our churches and in our culture. The Burkinabé can teach us to have hope in the difficult times.” Although there is a natural and meaningful connection with Mennonites in Canada and in Burkina Faso, there is a desire for a more formal partnership. To that end, Klassen will be attending meetings at the end of October at the invitation of the Evangelical Mennonite Church of Burkina Faso to explore this possibility.

—BY JOANNE DE JONG



Promotional Supplement



ONLINE NOW!

at canadianmennonite.org



Congo literacy program in demand

A campaign by Mennonites to use literacy education as a tool for evangelization is bringing hope to educators and learners alike. canadianmennonite.org/congolit



Politics and paper cranes

On the CM blog, MCC Ottawa policy analyst Bekah Sears reflects on the roots of her political passion. canadianmennonite.org/blog/bs-cranes



CPT creates Turtle Island Solidarity Network

Christian Peacemaker Teams has created a network of reservists who are engaged in Indigenous solidarity and decolonization work. canadianmennonite.org/turtleisland



Watch: One couple's generosity journey

"You can't make yourself broke by being generous," an Ontario couple says in this short video. "You'll always have enough to share." canadianmennonite.org/video/givingjoy



A theological experience for youth (grades 10 to 12) who want to develop their leadership gifts. More at ambs.ca/explore

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Schools Directory featuring Rockway Mennonite Collegiate

New scholarship named

Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener, Ont.

In Waterloo Region, Ont., Mennonite high school education is made possible by the generosity of our community.

This year, Rockway Mennonite Collegiate is introducing a new named scholarship: The Wilmer Martin Family Scholarship. It is given in honour of the lifelong commitment of Janet Martin (d. 2016) and Wilmer Martin (photo below, second from right):

"Education has always been an important focus for Janet and me," says Martin. "Our parents set an example for us in the value of Christian education. Janet's father sent all six of his children to Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite High (LMH) School. He continued to pay tuition for an additional 10 years to assist some children whose families didn't have the means to attend LMH.

"My parents did not finish Grade 8 and were required to leave school and help on

the family farms. However, they were committed that their four children would finish high school. They sent us to LMH for Grades 11 and 12 as dorm students.

"Janet and I were grateful for Rockway Mennonite Collegiate. Our children, Janelle (Class of '86, photo right), and Alan ('89, photo centre), both graduated from Rockway.

"Janet hoped and prayed that Alan and Christiane would also choose to send their children to Rockway.

"After Janet died, I discussed with my children my desire to do something at Rockway in her honour. The annual scholarship signifies the commitment of our family to continue the vision that Janet held close to her heart. It is my hope that others will join us."



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Calendar

British Columbia

Until Oct. 31: "Stories of the Anabaptists," an exhibit of Gareth Brandt's artworks, at the Mennonite Heritage Museum Gallery, Abbotsford.

Until Feb. 8, 2020: "Faces of Jesus," A Metzger Collection exhibit, at Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford. Open Wednesdays, Fridays and the second Saturday of each month from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Oct. 19: "Write your own story" workshop, at Valley CrossWay Church, Abbotsford, at 10 a.m. to noon. Keynote speaker: Author April Yamasaki. For more information or to register, visit bit.ly/yamasaki-workshop.

Nov. 8-9: Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. genealogy workshops, at the Mennonite Heritage Museum, Abbotsford.

Nov. 9,10: "Symphony of hymns 4," featuring Calvin Dyck, Crystal Hicks and Gail Suderman, in support of MC B.C. outreach ministries. (9) at Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond, at 7

p.m.; (10) at Level Ground Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, at 3 p.m.

Nov. 18-22: Annual Christmas market, at the Mennonite Heritage Museum, Abbotsford.

Alberta

Oct. 19: "Healthy ministry boundaries: Training for pastors and congregations," an MC Alberta Equipping Day event, at Trinity Mennonite Church, DeWinton, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Keynote speaker: Marilyn Rudy-Froese.

Oct. 26: Seventh annual Christian Muslim dialogue, "Heart of hospitality," at the ACCA Centre, Edmonton, at 9:30 a.m.; featuring Neveen Ayad and Scott Sharman. For tickets, visit acwalberta.ca.

Nov. 1-2: "Vision 20/20 Phase IV: Incarnating God's call," at Calgary First Mennonite.

Saskatchewan

Oct. 17-18: MC Saskatchewan continuing education days, at MCC Centre, Saskatoon.

Oct. 19: MC Saskatchewan Equipping Day, at RJC, Rosthern.

Oct. 26: RJC homecoming banquet and corporation meeting.

Nov. 13: RJC kielke supper fundraiser, at Bethany Manor, Saskatoon.

Dec. 19,21: RJC Christmas concerts: (19) at Knox United Church, Saskatoon; (21) at RJC at 7 p.m.

Manitoba

Until Nov. 9: Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg, presents two exhibitions on Hutterites: "Voices of conscience: Peace witness in the Great War" and "Our (Hutterite) life in art."

Oct. 25-26: "Mennonites and anthropology: Ethnography, religion and global entanglements," a Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies conference, at the University of Winnipeg. Keynote speaker: James Urry. For more information or to register, visit mennonitestudies.uwinnipeg.ca/events.

Oct. 26,27: Canadian Foodgrains Bank's "Singin' in the grain" fundraising concerts, featuring the

Encore Quartet and Canzona: (26) at Springfield Heights Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.; (27) at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Winkler, at 3 p.m.

Nov. 13-15: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate's senior-high students present "A Christmas Carol," at the Gas Station Arts Centre, Winnipeg. For more information, visit westgatemennonite.ca.

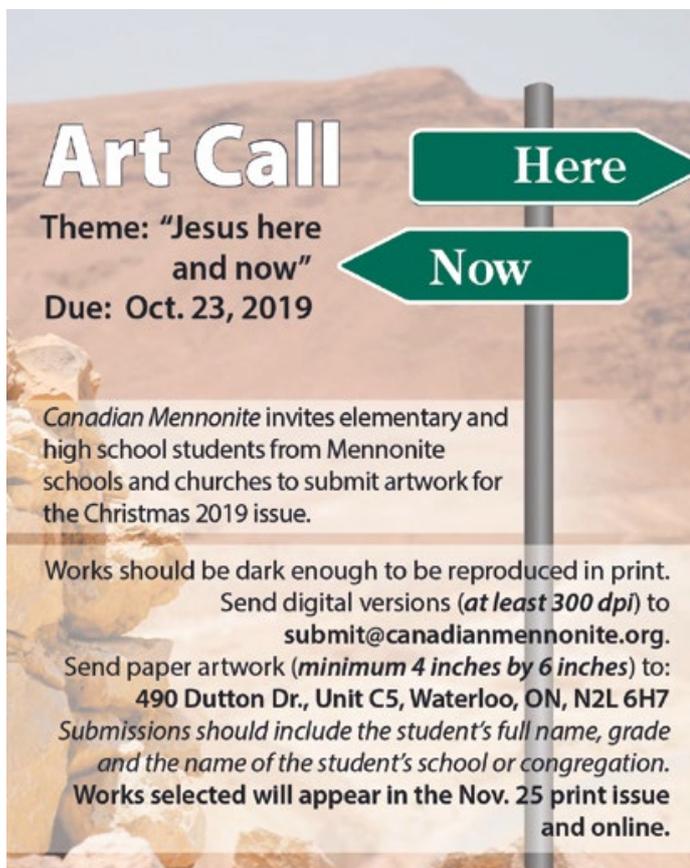
Nov. 19: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate hosts an "Evening of the arts," at 7 p.m. Includes music by school bands and choral groups, and a gallery of student artworks.

Nov. 25: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate holds its annual general meeting, at 7 p.m.

Ontario

Until Oct. 25: "New Fraktur," featuring recent works by Meg Harder, at the Grebel Gallery at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo.

Until May 2021: "Growing family: Design and desire in Mennonite genealogy" exhibit showcases family trees, hand-drawn charts



Art Call

Theme: "Jesus here and now"

Due: Oct. 23, 2019

Canadian Mennonite invites elementary and high school students from Mennonite schools and churches to submit artwork for the Christmas 2019 issue.

Works should be dark enough to be reproduced in print. Send digital versions (at least 300 dpi) to submit@canadianmennonite.org.

Send paper artwork (minimum 4 inches by 6 inches) to: 490 Dutton Dr., Unit C5, Waterloo, ON, N2L 6H7

Submissions should include the student's full name, grade and the name of the student's school or congregation.

Works selected will appear in the Nov. 25 print issue and online.



Mennonite Church Saskatchewan

Deepening our walk with each other...

Equipping Day 2019

Saturday, October 19, 9:00-4:30, at Rosthern Junior College

With special guest speaker Tom Yoder Neufeld, as well as workshops on #SafeChurchToo, walking with international and Indigenous neighbours, inclusive Bible translations, missions consultation, and communion.

To learn more and register, visit mcsask.ca.

and other ways Mennonites have remembered family; at the Mennonite Archives of Ontario, Waterloo. For more information, visit uwaterloo.ca/grebel/growingfamily.

Oct. 6: Make a Difference Day, for MC Eastern Canada's junior youth, at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg.

Oct. 10: Benjamin Eby Lecture, at the Conrad Grebel University College Chapel, Waterloo, at 7:30 p.m. Speaker: Mark Vuorinen, chair of the Music Department and associate professor. Topic: "Witnessing passion: Musical depiction of minor characters in passion music of Bach, Esenvalds, MacMillan and Pärt."

Oct. 18-19: "I am not alone" church planters workshop, in Hamilton. For more information, visit bit.ly/i-am-not-alone.

Oct. 18, 19: "A mile in my moccasins," a moccasin-making workshop, at 50 Kent Avenue, Kitchener, led by Madelaine Kioke: (18) at noon, (19) at 9 a.m. For more information or to register, visit mcco.ca/moccasins.

Oct. 19: "Empty bowls for Haiti" fundraiser to support MCC Ontario's commitment to sustainable change in Haiti, at Steinmann Mennonite Church, Baden; seatings at 5 and 7 p.m. For more information, visit mcco.ca/events.

Oct. 20: MCC Ontario presents "Across rivers and ocean," a celebration of the 40th anniversary of Canada's private sponsorship program, at Steinmann Mennonite Church, Baden, at 3 p.m. For more information, visit mcco.ca/rivers-and-oceans.

Oct. 22-23: Credence & Co. presents "Healthy boundaries in the context of ministry," a two-day workshop, at St. Catharines United Mennonite Church, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. Keynote speaker: Marg Van Herk-Paradis. For more information or to register, visit bit.ly/2kwLyEd.

Oct. 26: "School for laypeople: Doing spiritual care," An Anabaptist Learning Workshop event, Toronto United Mennonite Church/Mennonite New Life Church, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information or to register, visit bit.ly/school-laypeople.

Oct. 27: Bluegrass group Rescue Junction performs at the Detweiler Meetinghouse, Roseville, at 2:30

p.m. For more information, call Laurence Martin at 519-504-4591.

Oct. 29: "100 inches of rain: Redefining youth ministry in a post-Christian world," a youth worker webinar, with Michele Hershberger. Live location at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo. For more information or to register, visit mcec.ca/mcec-events.

Oct. 29-30: Credence & Co. presents the workshop "Giving and receiving feedback: Speaking truth in the love," at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. each day, featuring Betty Pries. For more information, visit bit.ly/credence-feedback-workshop.

Nov. 2: Pax Christi Chorale presents works by Vaughan Williams and Elgar, and "The Sun, the Wind and the Man with the Cloak," a new cantata by Stephanie Martin and Paul Ciufu, at Yorkminster Park Baptist Church, Toronto, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit paxchristichorale.org.

Nov. 10: "Following Jesus together as Anglicans and Mennonites, Pt. 2," at Renison Institute of Ministry, Waterloo, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Instructor: Pablo Hyung Jin Kim Sun.

Nov. 11: Fairview Mennonite Home hosts its annual handicraft sale, at the home in Cambridge, beginning at 9 a.m. Includes a bake sale and tea room, and much more.

Nov. 16: Nithview Christmas bazaar, featuring a bake sale, silent auction, community vendors and a tea room, in New Hamburg, from 2 to 4 p.m.

Nov. 16: MCC peace conference, at Bethany Community Church, St. Catharines, begins at 9 a.m.

Nov. 22-23: Annual "Spirit of Christmas" event, at Nairn Mennonite Church, Ailsa Craig, featuring juried craft show, Ten Thousand Villages booth and tea room: (22) from 6:30 to 9 p.m.; (23) from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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



Classifieds

Employment Opportunities



Career opportunity
Director of Spiritual Care and Culture

Fairview Mennonite Homes and Parkwood Mennonite Home are each hiring a Director of Spiritual Care and Culture. This newly created role will help us realize our vision to "Build a Community for All."

For more information, visit fairviewmh.com/employment or parkwoodmh.com/employment. To apply, email Elaine Shantz, CEO, at eshantz@fairviewmh.com. Deadline for applications: October 15, 2019.



Employment opportunity

Professor of Biblical Studies position open. Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana, is hiring a full-time professor of Biblical Studies to start July 1, 2020.

Preferred qualifications: Ph.D. or equivalent; expertise in Old Testament or New Testament studies and competence to teach in the other testament; intercultural competency; and the ability to inspire students in face-to-face and online learning environments. See a full job description at www.ambs.edu/jobs.



**Bergthaler
Mennonite
Church
of Altona**

Employment Opportunity

Youth Ministry

The **Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Altona** is seeking someone to join the ministry of our congregation with a focus on youth. We are looking for an individual that 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. Flexibility in duties to be determined based on candidates gifts.

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

Altona is a bustling rural community, just one hour south of Winnipeg, in the heart of south central Manitoba. www.altona.ca

Inquiries in the position can be made to Andrew Rempel, Search Committee Chair (andrewrempe@gmail.com) or Kathy Giesbrecht at Mennonite Church Manitoba, (kgiesbrecht@mennochurch.mb.ca).

Folk festival continues to support landless First Nations in Saskatchewan

Story and Photos by Donna Schulz
Saskatchewan Correspondent
SPRUCE HOME, SASK.

The Spruce River Folk Festival continues to shine the spotlight on landless Indigenous nations in Saskatchewan.

This year, the event, organized by a partnership that includes the Young Chippewyan First Nation, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan and Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan, saw a small but enthusiastic crowd enjoy music that ranged from country and pop to bluegrass to folk.

Ray Funk of Grace Mennonite Church in Prince Albert hosted the Aug. 10 festival on his farm near Spruce Home, as he has for the past nine years.

To kick off this year's festival, Wes Neepin of Grace Mennonite offered a prayer in Cree and raised the Treaty Six flag.

Berny Wiens of Herschel Ebenfeld Mennonite, this year's guest speaker, served as provincial minister of intergovernmental and aboriginal affairs under Roy Romanow, who was premier from 1991 to 2001. Wiens recalled working with the Treaty Land Entitlement Agreement and reflected on the far-reaching effects of that work.

Performers included Kiefer Paul, Amanda Goller and L.J. Tyson of Voices of the North, based in Prince Albert; Regina-based singer songwriter Jeffery Straker; Waldheim bluegrass band BJ and Friends; and Langham singer-songwriter Valerie Wiebe.

Between sets, master of ceremonies Tom Roberts, a former radio host with CBC, regaled the audience with stories from his life.

To view Donna Schulz's video of the event, visit canadianmennonite.org/spruce-river-2019.



Reserve 107 is a documentary film about the reconciliation that took place between the Young Chippewyan people and the Mennonite and Lutheran farmers who now farm the land that once belonged to them.



Five friends whose story is featured in that film were present at the Spruce River Folk Festival and gathered for a photograph. Pictured from left to right: Leonard Doell, MCC Saskatchewan Indigenous Neighbours coordinator; Ray Funk, host of the Spruce River Folk Festival; Jason Johnson, pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church in Laird, Sask.; George Kingfisher, former hereditary chief of the Young Chippewyan First Nation; and Kingfisher's son, Marshall Williams, current hereditary chief of the Young Chippewyan First Nation.



Indigenous country artist Kiefer Paul performs at the Spruce River Folk Festival. Backing Paul are Joel Rohs on guitar, Zach Kerr on drums and Stephen Williams on bass.



Joel Kroeker dances with his daughter at the Spruce River Folk Festival.