

A beautiful

tapestry of yellow

For those with eyes to see
more than a weed gone out of control

pg. 4

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EDITORIAL

What lingers in the air

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER
Executive Editor



At the end of May and into June, as news outlets reported on demonstrations in cities across

North America, we witnessed something more powerful than tear gas hanging in the air.

Demonstrators were angry at recent events in which individuals had experienced death at the hands of the police. But the size of the crowds and the intensity of their protests pointed to a long-held frustration with the way racism is embedded in the North American way of life.

While there were some “bad actors” taking advantage of the protests for their own purposes, many demonstrators were expressing something more elemental. Where was the justice that they were entitled to as members of a democratic society? Why were basic human rights being violated—again and again? Floating in the air was the feeling of grief, along with a profound sense of betrayal.

You and I may pride ourselves that we are not like the bigots carrying symbols of hatred and chanting white-supremacist slogans. But we live in a racist society and we benefit from the way our world is structured—favouring some and discriminating against others, simply because of skin colour.

“The truth is that white racism doesn’t exist only in the KKK bogeyman of the past,” writes Drew G. I. Hart, author of *Trouble I’ve Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism* (Herald Press, 2016). “Instead, it is pervasive within the air of dominant culture in subtle,

nuanced, and often unconscious ways. To acknowledge this doesn’t mean that your network is full of mean people. I don’t question the fact that many white people are extremely nice, but I still believe that most are socialized by and participate in a white dominant culture that has become adjusted to white supremacy and racial marginalization.”

Although Hart writes as an African-American in the U.S. context, much of his message is relevant to Christians in Canada as well. He encourages those of us in the church to take a hard look at our presuppositions, our policies, and our ways of acting that perpetuate injustice and cause trauma for people of colour. We must acknowledge the destruction that racism engenders. Racial inequity contradicts the good-news message of Jesus.

The work of racial reconciliation calls for serious self-examination and repentance. Those of us in dominant positions must recognize the ways in which our privileges have come at the cost of our sisters and brothers. Joseph Barndt, author of *Becoming an Anti-racist Church: Journey toward Wholeness* (Fortress, 2011), writes, “Racism is not only a sin from which we must repent but also an enslavement from which we need to be liberated.”

Indigenous speaker and author Kaitlin Curtice, in a 2018 *Sojourners* article, “Are white Christians retraumatizing people for the sake of diversity?” writes, “It is worth noting that the trauma we have endured has been at the hands of the church for generations, and our trauma must be recognized by the

institutional church to forge a path to communal healing.”

As we name what lingers in the air, we can explore new ways of living with each other. In her blog post, “9 avenues toward racial reconciliation,” Mennonite author April Yamasaki suggests a few specific actions we can take. Start with listening, she writes, which can be a form of active engagement. “Instead of assuming you already know, take on a posture of learning.”

She acknowledges that there is hard work ahead. “In the work of racial reconciliation, we need prayer and discernment to know when to be silent and simply listen; when to speak up, and how to do that without speaking over; how to act as partners instead of ignoring or lording it over one another; how to read Scripture and live deliberately as Scripture teaches; to be led by God and sustained by the Spirit.”

Canadian author Desmond Cole suggests, “Find the ways that you can support these struggles in your own communities. . . . You don’t have to go somewhere else to make a change, you don’t have to even be standing out on the street waving a placard to make change. Supporting black people and black struggles in your own community is the way we can all [make] a difference.”

The pain of racism lingers in the air we breathe. How will the Canadian Mennonite church respond? ❧

To learn more, visit commonword.ca and search for resources on racism and anti-racism.



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PHOTO: BY D. MICHAEL HOSTETLER / CANADIAN MENNONITE

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FEATURE

A beautiful tapestry of yellow

For those with eyes to see more than a weed gone out of control

By Kevin Derksen

I have a problem with dandelions. Late spring is high season for dandelions, when those bright-yellow blooms make their presence in yards and fields abundantly clear. Within a month or two, the flowers will be gone and the dandelion leaves will blend pretty well into the rest of the grass. Fresh from a good mowing, our lawn will look nice enough through the summer.

But right now, the truth cannot be so easily concealed. I suspect that a tipping point has already been crossed some time ago, and there is probably no straightforward way back to the lush, weed-free lawn that I look upon with envy in many impressive yards around my neighbourhood. I always take up the cause with renewed zeal for a short time in the spring, but soon I succumb to the overwhelming reality of the situation.

Sowing seed

When I do go out to take up the lawn-care battle, I often think of Jesus' parable about the sower in Matthew 13:1-13. The kind of sowing that Jesus describes in this little story is more like the spreading of grass seed than anything else. The seed goes down first, scattered widely to fall where it will. Then the sower tills the soil to allow good contact for the seeds, which the sower hopes will take root and sprout. Low precision, perhaps, but a lot gets planted.

Jesus describes the varied fates of this scattered seed, and I can imagine all of the conditions he mentions in my own yard:

- **The seed that** falls on the path and is taken by the birds.
- **The seed that** falls on rocky soil and can't get down deep.
- **And the seed that** falls in the midst of the weeds and is bullied into submission by a foot-long taproot.
- **Occasionally, I have** even seen proof of the seed falling on good soil that actually grows to fill in that patchy section of the lawn.

To the crowds gathered around him as he speaks, Jesus leaves his cryptic story hanging in the air. They don't get it, but that's nothing new. The previous chapters of Matthew describe Jesus' growing frustration with the many who do not respond to his ministry. They look without seeing and hear without listening. Jesus' own disciples don't have much more of a clue, until he finally takes them aside and offers an explanation. The parable, he says, is about hearing and understanding. It is about where the seeds of the kingdom will take root and grow.

The mystery of growth

Why do some respond readily, and others do not?

I suspect we ask this question with as much urgency as the early communities of Jesus-followers did. Why do some come to faith in Jesus while others take a different life path? What makes for receptive soil? And how do we make sense of those seeds that don't grow in the way we had hoped, no matter how carefully we tended to them?

A few things come to mind on this as I think about the parable.

First, there is no straight line between sowing and reaping. When you plant seeds, the outcome is unknown; it is a mystery. Sometimes seeds just don't sprout and grow. This is a reality we are familiar with, and one Jesus seems to have known, too, whether the problem is birds or rocks or weeds, or who knows what else. Jesus spent years teaching and healing and proclaiming the good news of God's kingdom. Lots of seeds were planted. But what did he harvest out of all that effort? Twelve shaky disciples and a lonely journey to the cross.

Planting seeds is an exercise in letting go. In fact, it is an exercise in letting die. The seed has to fall from your hand and bury itself in the ground, where you can no longer see it or watch its progress. You have to turn away and let it be. We can plant seeds, but we can't make them grow. This is as true with people as it is with grain.

This will sometimes seem unfair, and it will sting from time to time. We carry the heartache of hopes and dreams



PHOTO BY D. MICHAEL HOSTETLER

The gospel of dandelions makes a lot of sense. In this gospel, a wild and stubborn counterculture thrives in a world of domesticated lawns.

that are not realized, of lives that go off the rails, or at least off the script that we had so wanted to see followed.

But there is another side to this. The mystery of seeds also means that other things will grow, and in ways we cannot dare to imagine. We plant and tend and water, but God gives the growth. This is a good thing; otherwise, what grows would be limited by our capacities and our imagination.

Often we don't get to see the fruits of what we've planted. Sometimes the growth happens in other places, or even after we're gone. Sometimes others get to experience the harvest of our planting, and that's good news too. You can probably think of times when the grace of God erupted in good things that you could not have imagined. A long period of dormancy is suddenly

broken by a little green shoot that promises life and a new beginning.

The seeds Jesus planted and the seed he became for us continue to bear fruit in strange, wonderful and spectacular ways, harvests of 30- or 60- or 100-fold! This is the mystery of grace that works life from that which is left in the ground for dead.

That mystery is at work even where there is no sign of hope, even when the story seems over and the window for redemption past. Even when we grieve and say our goodbyes, carrying wounds in our hearts that may never heal. Even then, the God of seeds does not stop acting, working patiently in the lives of God's children.

Disciples

A second thing this parable suggests is

that you have to be a disciple to see what's going on as the kingdom of God comes alive. To the crowds, Jesus tells a story that is simple but rather impenetrable. But then he turns to his disciples and says, *"Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear!"*

What makes the disciples able to see and hear the secret of this parable? Why does Jesus reveal it to them? Is it because they are particularly shrewd or observant? Because they had a certain kind of breeding or upbringing?

No. In fact, these disciples are a sorry lot. The reason they're given a window into this mystery is because, when Jesus called them, they dropped what they were doing and followed him. They left their nets and their fishes, their families of birth, their wealth and livelihoods. They set out on a journey of

transformation as disciples of Jesus. That journey would change their hearts and minds, their eyes and their ears.

The kingdom of God is here, in our world and all around us. The God of creation is everywhere at work, tending a garden in which all are welcomed and valued and given what they need to flourish and grow. The things that kill and destroy cannot overtake this abundant harvest. By the power of the Holy Spirit, new life continues to spring up everywhere we look.

How do we see it? Where is this kingdom that does not have walls or

borders, that does not compete for space with the kingdoms of our world, that renews creation from the inside out? Most of the time, what we see when we look out the window is not especially promising.

There is a secret to catching a glimpse, but it's not one held back for a select few. It's a secret open to anyone willing to take a step into the unknown as Jesus calls them, anyone willing to release the seed so it gets buried in the ground.

A gospel of dandelions

In 2013, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada celebrated its 25th anniversary, taking for the celebration this theme of seeds and the parable of the sower. My congregation received a lovely commemorative “In every seed, a promise” banner featuring an image of seeds carried on the wind, released to wherever they might end up planting themselves. If you look at it more closely (*at left*), these seeds are actually coming off a dandelion!

The gospel of dandelions makes a lot of sense. In this gospel, a wild and

stubborn counterculture thrives in a world of domesticated lawns. It is resistant to pressure and persecution, and almost impossible to get rid of.

Its members are strongly rooted and nourished by deep wells of water and nutrients. They sprout edible leaves that can provide nourishment to others. Their bright flowers stand out, proclaiming their truth.

And as they die, their seeds offer themselves to the wind of God and the mystery of growth. They take flight on the Spirit's breath until they settle and take root wherever they are sent. Then comes an abundant harvest: a beautiful tapestry of yellow for those with eyes to see more than a weed gone out of control.

The kingdom of God is popping up all around us, like dandelions. ☘



Adapted from a sermon by Kevin Derksen, preached at St. Jacobs (Ont.) Mennonite Church on May 13, 2018.



☘ For discussion

1. What advice do you have for those trying to achieve a lush lawn without dandelions? Is it worth the effort? What things help us to see the beauty in dandelions?
2. Kevin Derksen writes, “We can plant seeds, but we can’t make them grow.” How do you respond when the seeds you planted with hope don’t germinate, die as small seedlings or get eaten? Do you respond differently when seeds planted by your church result in a meagre harvest?
3. Derksen says that sometimes the seeds we sow bear fruit “in wonderful, strange and spectacular ways.” Can you think of examples of when you have been surprised by where the Kingdom of God has grown? In these days of shrinking churches, where are the little green shoots that we might not be seeing?
4. What do you think Derksen means by a “gospel of dandelions”? Who might be the people who make up the “wild and stubborn counterculture that thrives in a world of domesticated lawns”? In what ways can dandelions be seen as a message of hope?

—By Barb Draper

See related resources for Jesus’ Parables at www.commonword.ca/go/2041

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/// Readers write

✉ 'Expect the unexpected'

When asked a few months ago what advice they would give about aging, a group of seniors responded, "Expect the unexpected." That advice is relevant to all of us this spring!

In later life it becomes increasingly difficult to predict what may be around the next bend. Life happens. And, as with a pandemic, we may not recognize our resources or find our resilience until we're in the midst of it.

As Joan Chittister writes in *The Gift of Years*, "In age, mystery comes alive. Nothing is very sure anymore. Everything speaks of maybe and perhaps, might and possibly. I might still be here. And I might not. . . . Then, as the years go by, we learn to trust the goodness of time, the glorious cornucopia of life called God."

Our spiritual lives can be a valuable resource when disappointments and upheaval come our way. Connection with others, the natural world and the divine ground us and reassure us that we are not alone, even when required to keep physical distance between us. Relationship with God also gives space for lament while inviting us to live faithfully in our circumstances.

While pandemic response implored us to protect the elderly, recognizing the physical vulnerability that comes with age, I hope we will also learn respect for those who have many years behind them, as carriers of hope and perseverance when things do not go as planned. And to learn from them to adapt when change is necessary.

In the meantime, may we carry on, with trust, hope and love—and absorb the peace that can come with expecting the unexpected.

JANE KUEPFER, WATERLOO, ONT.

The writer is the Schlegel Specialist in Spirituality and Aging at Conrad Grebel University College. Originally published in a longer form in the spring edition of Grebel Now.

✉ Is rent relief all about the tenants?

Re: "CPT urges Canada to 'cancel rent,'" April 13, page 12.

I find this article disconcerting.

With the Canada Emergency Response Benefit or federal employment programs that the government of the day has offered, many people are actually earning more than they did when they were gainfully

employed.

The article ties in the rent to being crucial to stopping the spread of COVID-19. But how does not paying rent reduce the spread of COVID-19?

What is the legal or moral responsibility of the tenant who has agreed to pay rent? Can they, in good conscience, just quit paying rent? How does that work? If a tenant has a bona fide issue with paying rent for whatever reason—being sick or lack of income—if they approach the landlord, they will in many instances get reprieve.

What is the impact to the landlord? What happens to their financial obligations and mortgages? Or is this not important? Maybe it's all about the tenants.

We need to also think of the long-term ramifications of not paying rent. Landlords will gravitate to other investments, thereby reducing the availability of affordable units. There are lots of other options for investors. Residential real estate has historically been a good, safe, albeit low, return for investors. For the good of all, let's try to keep it that way.

BOB SCHINKEL, STEINBACH, MAN.

✉ Reader celebrates MC Canada's diversity

Re: "Three churches withdraw from MC Eastern Canada," May 25, page 26.

It always saddens me when I hear about news like this, although I respect each of our decisions to follow our convictions. I find it quite interesting, however, that our theological diversity within Mennonite Church Canada was named as a reason to leave. For me, it has always been something to celebrate and learn from.

MOSES FALCO, WINNIPEG (FACEBOOK POST)

✉ Is the church ready for 'persistent agitation'?

I was in Wet'suwet'en territory in British Columbia when COVID-19 physical-distancing protocols were implemented across Canada. For two weeks, I served as a legal observer with Christian Peacemaker Teams.

I also went to Wet'suwet'en to form relationships with the people and the land, relationships that could speak into and inform my work with Mennonite Church Canada. I wanted to reflect on resolutions made by our ancestors in the Conference of Mennonites in Canada. Resolutions from 1977, 1987, 1993 and 1997, which were reaffirmed by MC Canada in 2007, publicly support the self-determination of Indigenous peoples and their authority over

unceded territories. They are public promises we've largely forgotten.

Back in January and February, Canadians watched many Wet'suwet'en solidarity actions take place in southern Ontario and P.E.I., and in the cities of Winnipeg, Victoria and elsewhere. It was an incredible Indigenous-led witness supported by many non-Indigenous people. The actions were remarkably effective.

As Martin Luther King Jr. once said, freedom and reconciliation would only "come to oppressed peoples through persistent revolt [and] through persistent agitation."

The question I wrestle with is whether the church will seek to orient more of our lives and our people into this "persistent agitation." Is this not what the Cruciform Christ calls us to? Is this not what many in our church imagined years ago when they repeatedly affirmed the basic rights of Indigenous peoples to land and life?

As director of MC Canada's Indigenous-Settler Relations program, I believe it's my responsibility to help discern with others how we can respond in greater measure to Indigenous peoples' call to "come and follow" and "take up the cross."

Our parents and grandparents in the faith heard in their day these unsettling and life-giving calls from Indigenous friends and colleagues. I believe that we must act on them, and I believe, that by the grace of God and the courage of the Spirit, we can.

STEVE HEINRICHS, WINNIPEG

Excerpted from a longer piece on the MC Canada website that can be viewed at bit.ly/after-wetsuweten.



✉ 'Decolonize' and 'settler' meaningless, pejorative terms

Re: "Let Wet'suwet'en exercise their right to self-determination" letter, April 27, page 7.

In reference to "decolonize," could I suggest a more meaningful 21st-century discourse, as there has been no colonies globally for 75-plus years. To suggest that the church should "decolonize" has no meaning for me and strikes me as irrelevant.

I find the use of the term "settler" a pejorative and somewhat absurd term, being as this is the 21st century and there have been no "settlers" for generations.

Using the term "settler" as a pejorative epithet is an insult to our great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers who, through industry and innovation, built our advanced, civil, 21st-century society with its

advanced parliamentary government, social system and compassionate health-care system.

To maintain, and even improve, this advanced 21st-century, civil society can't be done by regressively moving to any previous centuries' industry or social norms, and that includes embracing tribalism.

STEPHEN KENNEL (ONLINE COMMENT)

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.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Martens Denysuik—Lila Maëlle (b. April 28, 2020), to Kari Martens and Aaron Denysuik, Sterling Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg.

Voth—Darien Phynix (b. May 3, 2020), to Stephanie and Trent Voth, Toronto United Mennonite.

Deaths

Boehm—John, 85 (b. Sept. 23, 1934; d. April 21, 2020), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

Buehler—Floyd, 87 (b. Oct. 17, 1932; d. April 16, 2020), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

Dick—Nicholas William, 93 (b. Sept. 9, 1926; d. April 2, 2020), Toronto United Mennonite.

Klassen—Maria (nee Peters), 97 (b. Aug. 31, 1922; d. May 2, 2020), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Rempel—Maria (nee Hildebrandt), 94 (b. July 7, 1925; d. May 2, 2020), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Ropp—Mary E., 86 (b. June 1, 1933; d. May 3, 2020), East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Sauder—Lewis, 97 (b. June 17, 1922; d. April 10, 2020), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

Schlegel—Audrey, 83 (b. Sept. 7, 1936; d. May 3, 2020), East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Tann—Veronica Tann, 77 (d. May 13, 2020), Faith Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

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

Make room and time for the Holy Spirit

Gerry Grunau

As we emerge from our cocoons of self-isolation, what revelations will inform us as we move through the stages of our collective pandemic response?

This pandemic time has had far-reaching impacts. Employment issues, health issues and isolation issues have all been significant. For some, fortunately or unfortunately, there has been more available time to reflect on lifestyles, relationships, priorities, goals and the importance of faith.

A blog post from Emma Pavey (*bit.ly/lockdown-fruits*) helps focus reflections of faith with “fruit of the Spirit.” Her challenge to embrace the “fruit” of generosity is featured in this quote: “May we be thoughtful and generous in supporting companies, charities, ideas and movements that serve the common good and promote the well-being of the Earth. May we look for new ways we can serve that common good in a manner that brings us deep gladness.”

Our vision of the “common good” needs to consider not only the common good of the community that surrounds us in North America, but all the

communities that inhabit our common Earth. We have significant discussions about the supply of personal protective equipment and ventilators in our hospitals. We should also recognize the same supplies are not readily available in less-wealthy areas of the globe. A recent report indicated that 10 countries in Africa do not have any ventilators.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is reducing the scope of its international program because of anticipated overall revenue reductions due to thrift store closings and a decrease in donations. Programs are being cancelled in China, Vietnam and South Africa, and there will be an overall reduction of 25 percent of its international programming.

Mennonite World Conference (MWC) is receiving calls from Mennonite congregations from the Global South that are reporting a lack of food due to pandemic impacts. Similar calls a hundred years ago resulted in the formation of MCC and sending food support to Russia. MWC has a Global Sharing Fund in its organizational structure and it wants to increase the availability of shared resources.

The “common good” includes supporting MCC, the MWC Global Sharing Fund and their shared global objectives to respond to basic human needs. We need to reflect on how that serving, and that support, can bring us gladness and the assurance that we are effectively using the resources that God has given us.

Our goal should be to individually and collectively be the church in the midst of this health outbreak and the associated changes in our lives. What is the invitation from God to live within our uncertainties, and what opportunities are being presented to us to learn new dimensions about our faith and our mission?

Good things often happen when our lives are disrupted and are moving more slowly, so we can make room and time for what the Holy Spirit is calling us to do. ❧



Gerry Grunau was recently elected as Mennonite Church British Columbia's new moderator. He attends

Langley Mennonite Fellowship.

A moment from yesterday



In 2001, evangelist George Brunk II, left, reflected on his 65-year-long ministry. Brunk's style of revival meetings disrupted Mennonite communities. In a public talk at Conrad Grebel College he recalled, “At a time when Mennonite preachers stood still behind the pulpit, I would wander across the stage, carrying the microphone . . . from one end to the other— storming and denouncing sin in no uncertain terms.” Although unapologetic for many of his “traditionalist” views, he also acknowledged that “I have had my day, and it is now time for a new generation to make the decisions. I must have the grace to step aside . . .”

Text: Lauren Harder-Gissing, with reference to “George Brunk revisits his past,” by Jim Penner, *Canadian Mennonite*, June 12, 2000.

Photo: Mennonite Archives of Ontario



archives.mhsc.ca

IN THE IMAGE

Memories of Pa

Ed Olfert

June is the month when we honour fathers. My pa was George, born in 1921, died in '94.

Pa loomed large. I spent childhood years believing that I was a disappointment to him. The areas of his life where he was gifted, strong and confident, seemed always to correlate with my weaknesses.

I was certainly proud of Pa. His mind functioned like that of an engineer; and he dragged scrap iron together, welding, drilling and hammering to create useful things. He yanked engines out of vehicles and repaired them in an unheated garage in the winter. He attended auction sales, overheard a comment that a certain piece of equipment was probably junk, dragged that junk home and made it useful on his farm.

Pa was stubborn. No one ever successfully told him what to do.

As I grew, I began to pay attention to Pa in other contexts. His community—the folks he gathered comfortably around him—were not the “successful people.” He embraced and roared and told stories with *“the least of these.”*

Pa sat out the war. That wasn't a comfortable topic. When I raised that in his later life, he could mostly remember his anger that the *aeltester* (ordained

elder) had made that arrangement, and Pa wasn't allowed into that decision. In those times, he was sent to a construction gang near Thunder Bay, Ont. I hold the booklet that he kept track of his hours in. Mostly, Pa recorded his longing for his girlfriend, my mother. He also told stories of working alongside German prisoners of war and the relationships that developed through their common language.

The Olferts—Pa and his brothers—accounted for a high percentage of my heroes, as a boy and now. They taught me to live with passion, to gather around family, to be generous to relief causes, to laugh loudly, to hold opinions. Being among these big men was good.

An image comes to mind of relief auctions held in the church basement, the giggling among the brothers as they chased a brother-in-law to astronomical dollars for a loaf of bread or a pair of socks.

At the age of 12 or 13, I received a rifle. It was a coming-of-age thing. My mom, the minister's daughter, won the battle that we wouldn't receive toy guns—we made them out of wood instead—but the gun rack of real weapons was crowded. Pa wasn't much of a shooter; he was simply intrigued by guns.

In 1972, I married my own girlfriend, and her father Harold appeared in the larger family system. Harold was a Second World War veteran. Of the two fathers, Harold had a much milder spirit. He was a gentle and kind father-in-law. Harold had manners. He was no doubt unsure what it meant that his eldest daughter was connected to this Mennonite farm boy.

These very different two men, Harold and George, were now in the same orbit. They taught us lessons of dignity. They tolerated, respected and enjoyed each other. They modelled that differing stories did not mean a rush to disagreement. They came together out of their common goal to create a good space for this new understanding of family. While they brought very different gifts, there was room for all.

I feel Pa's wisdom, his encouragement, his appreciation of the younger generations, his awe of what family can be. They are the lessons of God. I feel him at my elbow when I pick up my welder, when I slow to watch road construction. And when his great-granddaughter decides that, no, she won't eat any more even when pressed, and as her mouth forms into a straight line, then George and I giggle together. ☺



Ed Olfert (p2ptheo@sasktel.net) is grateful for the story that surrounds him.

Et cetera

Urge Canada to protect all migrant workers with residency status

With COVID-19 exposing and enhancing the vulnerability of migrant workers, Kairos is asking Canadians for support, saying that “migrant workers deserve our deepest respect for the work they do.” On May 2, the *Globe and Mail* printed a letter by Connie Sorio, Kairos's migrant justice coordinator, who pointed out that Portugal recently granted migrants resident status during the pandemic and provided them with full access to health care and social services to help safeguard everyone in the country. Kairos wants Canada to “take it one step further by granting permanent residency for all migrant workers and ensuring safe working environments,” saying, “These workers have been fully vetted prior to coming to Canada and fill vital jobs that too few Canadians want.”

Source: Kairos



MIND AND SOUL

What kind of father?

Randolph Haluza-DeLay

Probably no father should risk writing a Father's Day column. Obviously, one's family is the first to say "Dad's not perfect." I hope I've been good enough. Parenting is a lesson in grace.

That fathers receive relatively less attention than mothers in our society is one of my pet peeves. Look at the Sunday comics on Mother's Day and compare them to the ones on Father's Day. At least analysis of popular culture shows that there are fewer of the incompetent-dad depictions than a decade ago.

Loads of research points to the important role of fatherly involvement for children. Children of involved fathers show more cognitive development, better academic achievement, higher extracurricular participation, social adjustment, career success, well-being, life satisfaction, and more.

Other research shows that women still carry the larger role in the household. Men and women work about the same number of hours, but when paid work and household work are tallied, women do less of the paid work. That obviously plays out in careers and accounts for some of the gender wage gap.

Less focus on fathers has another effect: We are much more shocked when a mother fails the caregiving

expectations than when a father does. I remember doing a normal child-care thing in a crowded airport and being told "You are such a good father" by a nearby grandmotherly type. Mothers don't hear that.

Remember the same-sex marriage debate of some 16 years ago? (Yes, it has been that long.) Every version of the "two parents of opposite-sex" argument also applied to the loss of a father, whether that would occur through death, separation, military service or employment at a long distance from home. Of course, children benefit from diverse role models, but role models and other forms of help for single parents can come in many ways, including other members of a church, better government support, and erasing the wage gap. Besides, no single person fits all the versions of their gender, like caring, providing and disciplining, for example.

Early in my own parenting, I read in these very pages of a father killed and leaving a family behind. The father was a peace activist in a dangerous part of the world. Is that an immoral vocation? I've read of pastor-fathers and community builders sometimes paying a high cost in terms of time and lives taken

away from children. Environmental activists are at particular risk in many parts of the world. I once interviewed a Christian dad heading to prison because he felt so strongly about the Earth his children would inherit that he acted against the system destroying creation and the laws upholding such destruction. Same with a civil-rights activist who had opposed the corruption of government and the racism in his society.

Are those fathers less caring? Do they make the wrong moral decisions in taking themselves from their families to pursue action for a better world?

Someone very dear to me argues that he is more moral than I am because he doesn't do community volunteering like I do. He says I fritter my time with involvement in groups that do not benefit my kids—like anti-racism organizations or refugee support. So I am less moral, he argues, than putting my time into efforts that benefit my own family directly, like coaching our kids' sports teams or building a more financially solid career.

Clearly, these are different types of fathers. They are different moralities, too. The hardest discussions are when there are fundamentally different foundations for the choices we make as parents. ❧



Randolph Haluza-Delay is a father of two, neither of whom was allowed to comment on the content of the first paragraph.

Et cetera



Ethiopian relief sent by MCC

In 1978, attention focused on Ethiopia's Bale Province where, as a result of the Ethiopia-Somalia Ogaden conflict, 400,000 displaced persons were living in destitution under plastic-sheet shelters. Early shipments of clothing, soap, blankets and dried milk were sent to the piers in November. Also approved was the purchase of three trucks to help in the distribution of corn obtained in a trade for 900 tonnes of wheat shipped from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

Source: Mennonite Central Committee



 TALES FROM THE UNENDING STORY

An intentionally inconsistent cat

Joshua Penfold

I'm reading through the Chronicles of Narnia with my girls at bedtime. We recently finished *Prince Caspian* and then watched the movie. Narnia has definitely influenced my Scripture reading lately.

Prince Caspian had been my least favourite of the series. I recalled long aimless wandering through the woods, endless dialogue and nature-related descriptions that slowed down the story to a yawning pace.

But this time through I was able to appreciate so much that I didn't remember previously. What struck me was the different characters' responses to the centuries-long absence of Aslan, the stories' Christ figure. Some had become bitter at the thought of Aslan, for where had this Great Lion King been and why had he not saved them from the oppression of the Telmarines? Others, like the badgers, still held hope and anticipated the return of Aslan. Other talking animals had lost the ability to speak, trees had gone so deep into themselves that they no longer danced or walked or spoke.

Lamentations 5 feels like it captured the sentiment of the Narnians. Allow me a Narnian translation: "You, oh Aslan, reign forever; your throne

endures from generation to generation. Why do you always forget us? Why do you forsake us for so long? Restore us to yourself, O Aslan, that we may return; return our days as of old unless you have utterly rejected us and are angry with us beyond measure" (5:19-22).

In the Bible, God's people wrestled with the seeming absence of God amid oppression. For us, it has been two thousand years since Jesus' assurance that he will be coming soon. Just as the Narnians had various sentiments toward Aslan, people hold different feelings toward Jesus.

Some carry bitterness, others have lost the ability to speak or have gone so deep inside themselves that their spirits can no longer dance or walk or speak. And some, like the badgers, have held on to hope, still anticipating the return of the Great King. This Lamentations passage found resolution in Narnia, and all found life anew upon Aslan's return. On Earth, it is perhaps already and not yet.

The movie is always different from the book, and I appreciated the thread woven into the movie that things don't happen the same way twice with Aslan. Reading through the Old Testament Book of Hosea reminded me of this;

nowhere else in Scripture is someone asked to marry a prostitute for the sake of a prophetic message about Israel's unfaithfulness. That God/Aslan doesn't do things the same way twice points me to the beauty of God's creativity and unpredictability. Why do something the same old way when you can make use of the limitless possibilities? What better way to keep God's people on their toes than to do things differently each time?

Yet we must somehow balance this with the great benefit in a healthy routine, in consistent spiritual practices, and resting in some of the sure unchanging realities of God. But there are so many reminders in Scripture that God is on the move, not static, not predictable, and not wanting us to think that the right formula or routine will guarantee or coerce God's presence.

Aslan may be a cat, but he cannot be tamed into a submissive and lazy house cat. God, likewise, cannot be tamed or domesticated or trained to do tricks for us. Maybe that's why Aslan is a cat and not a dog. God is wild and unpredictable and a bit scary, but also good. So good. So, like the badgers, amid our longing lament, may we faithfully await a new, surprising and wild God appearance. ✎



Joshua Penfold
(penfoldjoshua@gmail.com) tries to keep his eyes and heart on the lookout for Aslan.

Et cetera

New interactive Bible study available in Canada

The Canadian Bible Society has released a new study to explore the Bible, for groups and individuals—even while they maintain physical distancing. After enabling thousands of people across the U.K. and other parts of the world to grow in their understanding of the Word of God, the Bible Course is now available in Canada. Starting with creation, the Bible Course reveals the unique timeline of the Scriptures, from the Old Testament to the New, providing a better understanding of its one big story. To learn more about the content of the course, visit biblesociety.ca/thebiblecourse. To host the Bible Course, a group will need at least one set of course videos, plus one manual for each course participant. In light of the COVID-19 outbreak, the materials are also available in digital format (mp4 video download and PDF) suitable for an online small group or family setting.

Source: The Canadian Bible Society



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VIEWPOINT

My CERB story

Gratitude for government spending

Jonas Cornelsen

Does the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) mean the federal government is paying people to not work during the COVID-19 pandemic? Does this prove that a universal basic income would cause a mass exodus from workplaces and weaken our economy?

Manitoba Premier Brian Pallister seems to think so. I'm sure many agree with him.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is often used as an indicator of economic and social well-being. GDP basically measures how much money is being exchanged.

I was laid off in March, so what I've done since then doesn't count for GDP, although I have bought lots of groceries.

The CERB has helped me explore how I can benefit society beyond paid work. I want to share what I have been able to do without worrying about money:

- **Instead of** job-hunting, I'm planning a day in my neighbourhood when residents can connect over music at a safe distance.
- **I've also applied** to volunteer with Storytelling Alberta. I hope to share stories with seniors over the phone. Again, I can do this because I don't need to worry about income while laid off.
- **Because my partner** is still working, the CERB provides more than we need to pay the bills. We've increased our charitable giving to show gratitude for the financial support and care for our community.
- **With support coming in**, I can maintain the savings I have and go back to school this fall. I have applied for a program in therapeutic recreation, so I can help seniors stay happy, healthy and socially connected.

I know I have a lot of privilege. Even

having money saved up is not the norm. I'm grateful, and I want to live generously. The CERB has allowed me to pursue that. And a future universal basic income, or similar program, would free me to do more things I find valuable, with less concern for whether, or how much, I get paid.

A basic income would certainly change the way people work. But it would also change the way people prioritize relationships, volunteering and caring for each other. Some might work part-time, so they could be with their kids more. Others might spend an hour gardening instead of driving an hour to work. We could find richness in ways well beyond GDP.

To some, the CERB is a statistic. It's a massive government debt with no plan for paying it back. I would encourage you to see the CERB as a collection of stories.

My story is one example of how life-giving the CERB has been for Canadians in this difficult time. Beyond what I've listed above, I struggle with anxiety and depression, and appreciate that with this support I can simply stay home and rest if I need to.

The CERB also represents an opportunity for political engagement as Mennonites. In our churches, we proclaim values like social justice, mutual support and simple living. The CERB shows how policies and spending

programs can bring our values to life in the public sphere.

While Mennonite history and theology also show hesitance around state politics, we cannot let theological hang-ups stop us from actively supporting measures that could change so many lives. Political engagement is not the only way to live out our values, but it is important because of how many people, especially the most vulnerable, are impacted by government decisions.

We should be sceptical about the potential for states and governments, captive to the whims of voters and the lust for power, to act for justice. We should absolutely never confuse the Crown of Canada with the Kingdom of God. But we should, at every opportunity, encourage the best possible use of power for what good it can achieve.

I am incredibly grateful for what the CERB has given me. Please remember that my story is not only personal. It's political. I am in this position largely because of a specific government policy. Policies matter, and, as Mennonites, we need to speak up for policies that promote social justice.

Mennonite theology says little about GDP. It says a lot about caring for each other. Let's keep that in mind when we hear about governments paying people not to work. ☸



Jonas Cornelsen lives in Calgary. He graduated from Canadian Mennonite University in 2016; his undergraduate thesis was on

"Anabaptist political theology." He attends Calgary Inter-Mennonite Church, where his partner is the community-care pastor.

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VIEWPOINT

Jesus Christ, our only hope

José Rutilio Rivas Domínguez

Right now, the planet is in a panic about COVID-19. This illness is infecting and killing people regardless of ethnic, linguistic or socio-economic background.

lift up my eyes to the hills—from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth” (Psalm 121:1-2).

This plea was probably called out by

Jesus goes out to meet humanity

Jesus Christ should be our only hope in moments like the one that humanity is living through today. It is precisely in situations like the one we find ourselves in that Jesus meets humanity, bringing hope, offering consolation to those who weep, healing the wounds of those who suffer from the evil that societies face at the moment. It is comforting to remember that when humanity was drowning in sin with no way out, Jesus brought

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Hopelessness and helplessness

Scientists are working day and night to find an encouraging solution for humanity, but the complexity of the disease is hampering efforts and there is still no good news on this front.

In a number of countries, clinics have collapsed under the weight of infected patients because their numbers exceed the capacity. Health-care professionals are becoming infected and many die, in some cases because they do not have access to essential protective gear.

In some countries, there is insufficient space in cemeteries to bury the dead, so they are being buried in mass graves or in their backyards, while some are even left by the wayside.

As of June 1, more than six million people have been infected worldwide—and close to 2.6 million have recovered. However, the most painful part of this tragedy are the more than 372,000 people who are sadly no longer with us. Suffering, hopelessness and impotence have taken hold of humanity.

Many churches that are doing all they can to continue encouraging humanity with the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to serve in the midst of this crisis, have had to close their doors in obedience to preventive physical distancing measures. This reality has struck a hard blow to the faith of some, even more so when they have seen family members or friends die while ministers and pastors are powerless to even bury the dead.

An answer

The world appears to be without hope. But an answer for humanity today is waiting within the pages of the Bible: “I

King David. It offers us hope in moments of anguish when all seems to be going badly, with no way out and nobody at hand to help us.

It is a plea that inspires us to still believe that God will bring much-needed help—and on time as well. It reminds us that, when humans are unable to find a solution of their own accord, God can help us to understand what has happened, often without exempting us from suffering.

Understanding reality brings hope and nourishes our faith so that we can help others.

Only God

Psalm 91 poetically proclaims the hope of being freed from the grip of a deadly plague by portraying God as a father or mother who clothes their children in protective love in order to shield them from cold and danger. Surely what the psalmist is expressing is based on communal experiences of something similar or worse than the novel coronavirus.

“For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence; he will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler” (Psalm 91:3-4, NRSV).

salvation through his death on the cross.

In this global context we could mention the prayer of Christ’s disciples as they faced a crisis caused by the threats made by the powers of the day. Those powers put at risk the Christian community’s freedom to preach the message of Christ, even to the point of their lives being in danger.

“And now, Lord, look at their threats, and grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus” (Acts 4:29-30, NRSV).

So, in the midst of these difficult times, it is possible for us as a global Anabaptist community to bring the hope of Jesus Christ to humanity, as we pray to God for confidence and courage to live this reality, while also offering help, love and prayer for health to those who are suffering and are without hope. ☿

José Rutilio Rivas Domínguez is a pastor-theologian from Istmina, Colombia, and a member of the Mennonite World Conference Mission Commission.

Making their world a more beautiful place

RJC High School students engage in alternative ALSO Week

By Donna Schulz

Saskatchewan Correspondent
ROSTHERN, SASK.

For many students at Rosthern Junior College (RJC High School), ALSO Week is one of the most memorable and meaningful experiences of their school year.

ALSO stands for Alternative Learning and Service Opportunities. Each spring during ALSO Week, students leave campus for a variety of destinations to learn about and serve vulnerable people in those communities.

This year, students were scheduled to go to Calgary, Toronto, and Oliver, B.C. But students left campus in mid-March due to COVID-19. With all students either at home or in home-stays with other families, and with the school delivering education remotely, ALSO Week seemed like it might be another dream dashed by the pandemic.

But the first word in the ALSO acronym is “alternative,” so teachers came up with a creative alternative to the usual off-campus learning experience.

The theme chosen for this year’s ALSO Week, which was held from May 4 to 8, was Matthew 5:14: *“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.”*

“ALSO is integral to our Christian ethics programming,” principal Ryan Wood says. “The core reason [for the program] is to create opportunities to serve.” Wood and his teaching staff realized that they could still do this within the parameters of physical distancing and remote learning.

So they encouraged students to engage in random acts of kindness and to pick up trash for an hour or two in order to make their world a more beautiful place.

The students, says Wood, embraced the opportunity. Many collected garbage.

Some helped their parents with various tasks. One student baked cookies and delivered them to her neighbours’ doorsteps. Another painted a cheerful picture in her living room window for passersby to enjoy. Still another helped with her church’s bottle drive to raise funds for Mennonite Central Committee.

But ALSO Week wasn’t just about doing random acts of kindness. Students also participated in online seminars to learn about the themes they would have explored on their planned trips.

One seminar, led by teacher David Epp, focused on food security. Working with information from the Gleaners and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, students created a word bubble to help express what they learned.

Another seminar addressed the issue of homelessness. Pete Olsen of Mennonite Central Committee Ontario shared pictures and stories with the students about how COVID-19 is affecting homeless people in Toronto. In turn, students shared how homeless people are affected in their cities. These included stories from Hong Kong, South Korea and Thailand.

The final day focused on servant leadership. Teachers used that day to encourage students planning to return in the fall to consider serving one another on either the student representative council or the student community council.

Each day, students were also asked to reflect on the day’s theme in their journals.

Wood stresses that student participation in this year’s ALSO Week was completely voluntary. “They [didn’t] have to be there,” he says. “They’ve all been given their credits.” In spite of this, there was a “high level of engagement” from most students.



PHOTO COURTESY OF
RJC HIGH SCHOOL

Tianna Bartsch, a Grade 11 student at RJC High School, makes her world more beautiful by painting her living room window as part of the school’s ALSO Week activities.

“They asked questions, were prepared, and reflected in their journals,” he says. “Even that was an act of volunteerism or service in itself. I was very touched by the [number] of students that got involved.”

“There’s a big appetite right now for good news stories,” says Wood, who thinks that students “wanted to be part of something that was [about] letting their light shine.” ☞

Pandemic causes MCC program cuts, changes

By Laura Kalmar
Mennonite Central Committee

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has scaled up its work to respond to the global crisis, increasing projects related to water, hygiene and sanitation, local health initiatives and food relief.

But given the negative economic effects of COVID-19, including funding uncertainties, travel restrictions and other factors, MCC has made strategic decisions regarding other programming to ensure that its core mission remains strong in challenging times and continues to benefit some of the world's most vulnerable people.

International program closures

MCC will end all programming in South Africa, Lesotho and Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), effective March 2021, after working in southern Africa since 1971. In the last five decades, MCC's work with local partners has increased food security in selected communities in Lesotho, improved health and education in Eswatini, provided for the immediate needs of refugees in South Africa and contributed toward building resilient and peaceful communities.

Programming activities in Vietnam will also be completed by March 2021. Its work there began in 1954 with emergency relief for families displaced during the country's civil war. Peacebuilding efforts followed, promoting reconciliation between the United States and Vietnam. More recently, it has worked with local partners to help families affected by Agent Orange, providing training in occupational therapy and increased livelihoods.

Programming in China will end effective July 2020. Since 1982, MCC has regularly placed English teachers through Mennonite Partners in China (MPC); facilitated the participation of Chinese young adults in MCC's International Volunteer

Exchange Program (IVEP), helping them learn and grow through short-term volunteer placements in Canada and the States; and supported social assistance projects.

"We're grateful for the dedicated and passionate service of MCC staff in all these locations, both past and present" says Mark Epp, co-director of MCC's international program. "These women and men have built long-lasting and caring relationships with local partners and communities. That's the beauty of our partnership model: those relational ties have a lasting and ongoing impact."

"We know our local partners will continue to do the good work of serving their communities and finding innovative solutions in their local context," adds Ruth Keidel Clemens, co-director of the international program. "We are grateful for all the gifts and expertise they have shared with MCC over the decades."

Other international changes

Administrative oversight for programming in the remaining 17 African countries where MCC works will be consolidated, falling to two area director couples rather than three.

Administration of MCC programming in Honduras and Nicaragua will be consolidated in July 2020. Administration of programming in Tanzania and Kenya will also be consolidated, with timing still to be determined. MCC representatives in Nicaragua will lead MCC's ongoing work in both Honduras and Nicaragua. MCC representatives in Kenya will lead MCC's ongoing work in both Tanzania and Kenya.

Administration of MCC programming in several Middle Eastern countries will be restructured, eliminating one representative role. MCC representatives in Lebanon will take on oversight of project work in Iraq, in addition to Lebanon and Syria. MCC representatives in Palestine

and Israel will take on oversight of project work in Jordan.

MCC's work in West Europe also will undergo administrative transition, with the representative role ending in July 2020. MCC area directors for the region will assume responsibility for the work, which is primarily focused on building connections with Anabaptist churches



and agencies in eight countries.

"While these weren't easy decisions, they were necessary" says Clemens. "MCC anticipates a decrease in overall income due to COVID-19, with the temporary thrift shop closures, relief sale cancellations, a decline in the Canadian exchange rate, and the general effects of COVID-19

With these closures and transitions, at least 13 positions will end in the current fiscal year.

on the economy. Though painful, programming changes were necessary.”

“These decisions were also informed by MCC’s core mission and new set of strategic directions,” adds Epp, “which were put in place by the Canada and U.S. boards to shape the next five years of our work. Guided by those directions, we want to focus on the most vulnerable communities where we can have the most impact. Our goal is to live more deeply into our core mission as funds allow.”

With these closures and transitions, at

least 13 positions will end in the current fiscal year. MCC is working with these staff members to help them transition well and is grateful for their inspiring commitment to serve.

Cancellation of IVEP in Canada this year

IVEP in Canada has been cancelled for the 2020-21 year (August through July), resulting in the elimination of all previously announced volunteer placements throughout the provinces.

“While we had hoped we could carry the program forward this coming year in Canada, this is no longer the case,” says Rick Cober Bauman, MCC Canada’s executive director. “Uncertainties around securing visas and travel plans, as well as reduced financial resources led us to this disappointing decision.”

Engaging young adults remains a priority for MCC, and plans are still in place to host IVEP volunteers in the U.S. for the 2020-21 year. As well, other short-term service programs for young people will move forward as planned, although some with shortened assignments. For more information, visit mcccanada.ca.

Shifts in Canada and U.S. domestic work

In the U.S. and Canada, MCC’s domestic program faces many of the same challenges as its international work, with uncertain funding and ongoing travel restrictions.

In response, some layoffs—both temporary and permanent—have occurred and open jobs will remain unfilled for the foreseeable future.

MCC is also applying other tools to help reduce overall expenses, including employee compensation reductions, deep cuts in travel and training, and additional reductions in multiple budgets. It will continue to monitor funding and expenses, and may make necessary further cuts to international and domestic programs, as well as operations. ❧



MCC PHOTO BY MATTHEW SAWATZKY

Mushiya Christine, Kayaya Lulula and Veronique Lumba Misenga took part in a support group for older refugees in 2017, run by MCC partner Refugee Social Services in Durban, South Africa. These elders can feel isolated and stressed, but home visits and support groups help them feel connected.

❧ #COVIDkindness

Sewers respond to urgent need in Indigenous communities



MCC SASKATCHEWAN PHOTO

MCC Saskatchewan’s donor stewardship coordinator Karla Kohen and Indigenous Neighbours coordinator Randy Klassen stand with donated masks that will be distributed to Indigenous communities throughout the province.

When Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Saskatchewan sent out a request for people to sew masks for Indigenous communities affected by COVID-19, the response was immediate and heartfelt. The request came from the Office of the Treaty Commissioner and detailed urgent needs in Indigenous communities like La Loche in northern Saskatchewan, which have been particularly hard hit by the pandemic. Randy Klassen, MCC Saskatchewan’s Indigenous Neighbours coordinator, says, “The call went out on Tuesday, May 5. By Friday, May 15, approximately 1,200 masks had been delivered to the MCC office.” The masks, says Klassen, represent the efforts of at least two dozen women, mostly from Saskatoon, but also from Swift Current, Regina, Hanley, Langham, Hepburn and Prince Albert. He adds that many different churches were represented. “Some of these are regular MCC volunteers—master quilters and blanket makers,” says Klassen. “Others, including a Grade 10 girl who heard about the project, are new to MCC and were happy for an opportunity to contribute to this urgent need.” Klassen delivered the masks to Treaty Commissioner Mary Culbertson on May 19. They will be going to vulnerable communities throughout Saskatchewan, including the far north, says Klassen.

—BY DONNA SCHULZ

COVID camp closures

By Amy Rinner Waddell / Ross W. Muir
B.C. Correspondent / Managing Editor

Camp Squeah of Hope, B.C. has cancelled its 2020 camping season due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a May 15 statement, camp director Rob Tiessen wrote, “In order to best ensure the health of our campers and staff, we have made the difficult decision to cancel our 2020 summer camp session. This applies to all day and overnight camp programs, including Family Camp.”

With provincial regulations in place for the foreseeable future regarding physical distancing and group-size restrictions, staff and board decided they could not provide a suitable camping experience.

“We are deeply saddened by the loss of the shared camp experience,” Tiessen further explained. “We value the nurture, care and development this experience offers a child, and will mourn its loss this summer. We believe, however, that this decision is in the best interest of our community of staff and campers for 2020.”

Instead, this summer Squeah staff will shift their attention to other things, such as onsite work projects. “Almost like leaving a field fallow for a year without planting, some of our full-time staff have worked tirelessly through many summers in a row and will benefit from a slower-paced summer season,” said a statement on the camp’s website.

Camp Squeah fully plans to resume its camping season for summer 2021.

Similar stories are mostly playing out across the country.

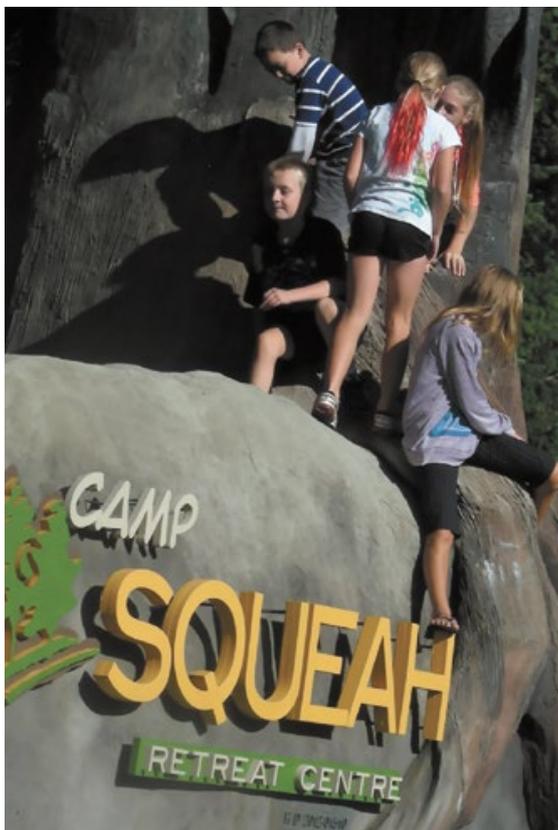


PHOTO BY AMY RINNER WADDELL

B.C. children will not be able to attend Camp Squeah this summer due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Camp Valaqua: Alberta

“It is with a heavy heart that we recognize the need to cancel our summer camp program for 2020,” a statement on Valaqua’s website states. “[W]e are deeply saddened that we will not be able to share this summer with you and your children.”

The decision was made after the provincial medical officer of health announced in late April that gathering restrictions will remain in place through the summer months. “We quickly realized that to support this we will not be able to run a traditional summer program,” the website indicates, adding, “We have closed the registration process for summer 2020. Camp Valaqua is offering full refunds for all fees paid.”

Shekinah Retreat Centre, Youth Farm Bible Camp, Camp Elim: Saskatchewan

• “After long discussions, consultations and prayer, Shekinah Retreat Centre has decided to cancel summer camp for 2020,” according to an announcement in Mennonite Church Saskatchewan’s weekly e-newsletter. “Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we feel we are unable to deliver our summer camp program in a way that adequately protects our staff, volunteers, parents, grandparents and campers. . . . Please continue to keep Shekinah in your prayers during these very difficult times.”

• As of press time, Youth Farm Bible Camp was waiting to make “a decision about how summer camp proceeds . . . when we have more information available,” according to a notice on its website. “We may run smaller camps, we may have no camp, or we may have our regular summer camp program.” This information will become available once the camp makes a decision in consultation with the province’s public-health authority. “We will be running a junior staff

program this summer—either online or at the camp.”

• **Camp Elim**, located south of Swift Current, has decided to cancel all of its 2020 summer programming. It is exploring the possibility of offering some digital camp programming on social media.

Camps with Meaning: Manitoba

“Sadly, we’ve had to make the decision to cancel overnight camps for this summer,” the MC Manitoba e-newsletter states. “We are still looking at various day-camp options, but most of those decisions will be based on health guidelines that are not in focus yet.

“It’s worth noting that a lack of camper

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and rental revenue is putting the camp finances in a difficult position. Please pray for disappointed campers, staff and the parents who were hoping for a break. Please pray for the ongoing financial health of our camping ministry.”

Willowgrove, Silver Lake, Hidden Acres: Ontario

- **Willowgrove, which** offers summer camps, outdoor education and seasonal events from its Willowgrove Day Camp and Outdoor Education Centre in Stouffville and Fraser Lake Camp in Bancroft, has moved online, offering Camp @Home camping experiences. For more information, visit campathome.ca.

- **“With a heavy heart,”** Silver Lake Mennonite Camp at Sauble Beach “is confirming the cancellation of all summer 2020 overnight camp programs,” according to a letter from camp leaders. “Refunds will be processed over the month of July”

The camp is still considering alternate options for it campers in leadership training program and its Discovery Day Camp.

“With your support, we will be able to continue operating in the seasons to come despite the setbacks of COVID-19. Next year we will be celebrating Silver Lake’s 60th anniversary, and we are hopeful to see what God will do beyond this milestone.”

- **In a letter** from Chris Oldham, Hidden Acres’ executive director, he says, “It is with heavy hearts that we write to inform you that our summer camps as we had planned them for 2020 are cancelled.”

He says that plans are in the works to “help keep you engaged with Hidden Acres this summer, including online programs for June, July and August. . . . We are currently exploring whether the cancellation of overnight camps this summer applies to our rentals and camping groups.”

“During this time of closure, we have experienced tremendous generosity from many of you, and we are so grateful for it,” he says. “We have been blessed by the words of hope and encouragement we have received and the ongoing financial support to help us with the day-to-day operations. ❧

B.C. thrift shops open again for business

Story and Photo by Amy Rinner Waddell

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

After more than two months of being closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the 10 Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) British Columbia thrift shops were reopening with limited hours by the end of May.

“As the province plans to ease restrictions gradually after the May long weekend, we at Centre Thrift are now taking steps towards reopening in line with B.C. provincial government directives,” explained a post on the provincial MCC Facebook page earlier in May.

Several shops opened for business on May 20. The Mission thrift store announced its opening for June 1.

MCC Centre Thrift in Abbotsford opened May 25, with the first hour reserved for seniors and those with underlying health conditions. Shoppers waited patiently outside until being admitted into the building in limited numbers. The store had opened one day a week before to receive donations. Due to limited staff and volunteers, plans to take donations on opening day were put on hold.

Various stores announced procedures to keep volunteers and customers safe. Some of these included installing hand-sanitizing stations at the door, closing washrooms and fitting rooms, and holding all donations in quarantine for 72 hours before sale.

All locations announced they were following national MCC thrift shop guidelines, including physical distancing in the store, following directional signs, encouraging shoppers to pick up only what they need and asking those feeling unwell to stay home. ❧



Despite the rain, customers line up patiently to enter MCC Centre Thrift in Abbotsford on re-opening day, May 25. Thrift shops in B.C. had been closed since mid-March due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Offline life during COVID-19

How are people without internet connecting with their communities?

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent

When the novel coronavirus pandemic hit, life went online. From school classes and fitness workouts to worship services, everything started streaming on the web. But what happens if you don't have internet access? How are those Mennonites staying connected with their churches?



GAMEO PHOTO BY BERT FRIESEN

North Kildonan Mennonite Church has about 25 regular attendees that are not connected online.

"It is a little different without being able to go [to church]. We miss it, but, you know, take the circumstances as it is," says Irene Seifert, 87, who attends North Kildonan Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.

Of the 100-person average that attends the church every Sunday, "I would think we have at least 25 people who regularly come to worship but are not connected online . . . that's substantial," says Marvin Thiessen, the church's lead pastor. All of those offline folks are 80 years old or older and a number of them live in care homes.

For people with internet, the North Kildonan team is recording services in the church and uploading them to YouTube and occasionally meeting via Zoom. For those without, "We are hand-delivering every week a bulletin and printed sermon to them. Our deacons, we call them caregivers in our church, have made it a point to be in phone contact with all the single people who do not have internet access,

which is almost all of that number," says Thiessen.

The pastors and church council are reaching out to everyone in the congregation.

Seifert says North Kildonan has been "very good" at checking in with her by phone and providing resources. She's also grateful for Springfield Heights Mennonite Church. Seifert lives in KingsfordHaus, a seniors housing cooperative attached to Springfield Heights, along with about 10 others from North Kildonan who also don't own electronic devices.

Springfield Heights' German and English services are both streamed for residents in the lunchroom on Sunday mornings. "It's a big movie screen that we have there and they set it up for us, and they're really quite good at it," says Siefert, who attends the German service and often stays for the English one, too, in addition to reading the materials that North Kildonan distributes.

For Hilda Nikkel, COVID-19 is the reason she decided to go online. Nikkel, 58, lives on a two-hectare property in the country, a few kilometres from Sarto. She doesn't have internet access at home and, until very recently, no computer either.



ELIM MENNONITE CHURCH FACEBOOK PHOTO

Elim Mennonite Church stands empty for now, its members meeting by Zoom, and sermon notes available for those not connected to the internet.

In order to access the Zoom worship services from Elim Mennonite Church, her

congregation in Grunthal, she dials in by phone. But she says holding the phone to her ear for an hour-and-a-half got tiring, and, of course, she couldn't see the faces of her fellow church members.

"I would not say that I have felt disconnected because I don't have internet. I phone people at church, so there's connections that way," Nikkel says.

Over Easter, she and her sister, who are both deacons at Elim Mennonite, delivered *paska* to the seniors in their congregation. Nikkel also continues to work full-time and has online access during those hours.



PHOTO BY MATTEA NICKEL THIESSEN

Hilda Nikkel decided to buy a computer and set up the internet at her home because of the pandemic.

But with only a phone to stay connected at home, she says, "I decided maybe now is the time to get internet access." She bought a laptop, and her next step is to install a tower on her property to get a signal, since it is surrounded by bush. In the meantime, she goes to her church on Sunday mornings and uses its wi-fi to connect to Zoom on her new computer.

Other churches across Manitoba are using similar methods to connect with their unplugged congregants. Carman Mennonite Church delivers packages to about 12 people every Saturday, which include a community newsletter, announcements and a printed copy of the sermon and worship service. Charleswood



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARVIN THIESSEN

Marvin Thiessen is lead pastor of North Kildonan Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, where at least 25 congregants don't have internet access.

Mennonite Church in Winnipeg mails the weekly bulletin and prayers from the worship service to the only two people in the congregation without internet access. Both churches also delivered hymnals when they stopped meeting in person.

"I have talked with a number of the people over at KingsfordHaus during this time, and they have expressed lots of appreciation for receiving the materials," says Thiessen.

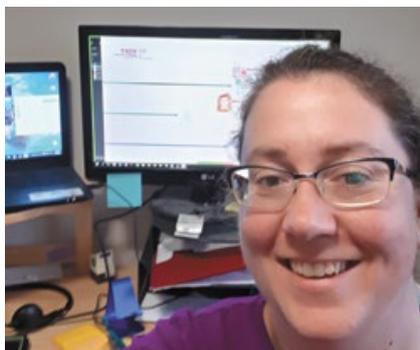
"We didn't get [internet] when we were just a bit younger yet, and we didn't think we needed it, but now I think it would've been nice if I would've got it," Seifert says. "But at the time my grandsons were trying to set me up on a computer, I said, 'Why am I going to play around with that thing when I can go downstairs and do my sewing?' . . . So I never did learn it."

Seifert says the new format doesn't significantly change her worship experience, although she misses the sanctuary and friends' faces. She continues to do her devotions and read her Bible every day, taking the circumstances as they come. ❧

**'I would think we have at least 25 people who regularly come to worship but are not connected online . . . that's substantial!'
(Pastor Marvin Thiessen)**

❧ #COVIDkindness

Intergenerational gamers play online at Trinity Mennonite



Selfie of Andrea Kapf playing Drawful2 during the online games night put on by Trinity Mennonite Church in DeWinton, Alta., every two weeks.

DEWINTON, ALTA.—Trinity Mennonite Church gamers of all ages play online every two weeks as a way to get together during the COVID-19 pandemic. The church purchases games from an online site, which are then played through Zoom and the gaming site simultaneously. The games go from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m., and families can pop in for just a couple of games or for the entire evening. Younger children tend to come at the beginning, with youth often joining after 8 p.m., to play more difficult games. The younger children especially enjoy a T-shirt-creating game, where each person submits a design with random slogans and then everyone votes for their favourite. A recent winner was "Dadio is a weirdo." Teens tend to gravitate towards trivia games like Trivia Murder Mystery Party, while many seniors, some over 80, like Truth and a Lie. Game nights at Trinity Mennonite have included as many as 22 players. "There is definitely something for everyone," says Andrea Kapf, Trinity's church communications coordinator and games-night organizer.

—BY JOANNE DEJONG

❧ Staff change

Peter Rempel named interim MC Manitoba administrator



Peter Rempel will begin the position of interim administrator with Mennonite Church Manitoba at the end of June, following the departure of Ken

Warkentin, the regional church's current executive minister. Rick Neufeld will add the role of interim executive minister to his current duties as director of Leadership Ministries, while Rempel will take on the administrative tasks of the executive minister role. Rempel and his wife Elsie, who attend Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, returned to Canada at the beginning of May after living and doing voluntary service in Germany for four months. He sorted and entered the collections of German Mennonite service agencies in the German Mennonite archives and library in Weierhof. Rempel comes to this new position with experience in regional-church work, as he was MC Manitoba's moderator from 2012 until 2018. Since retiring in 2012 from his work as executive director of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Manitoba, he has emerged from retirement for four different part-time interim executive roles, with Initiatives for Just Communities, the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation and MCC Manitoba. This will be his fifth such role.

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE



'We want to tell the story'

Tour company hosts virtual tours of Mennonite museums

By Janet Bauman
Eastern Canada Correspondent

A Mennonite man escapes an ambush during the California Gold Rush because he had a fast horse. We know his story because he left behind a set of diaries.

Another Mennonite stuffs his child's doll with British and American currency, and smuggles it out of Russia in 1927. When his whole family is ordered off the train at the border and searched for valuables, the money remains safe inside the doll, sitting under a bench in the waiting room of the train station. Later, he uses the money to buy a farm in Saskatchewan, where the family eventually settles. We know this story because the family donated the doll to a place where it can be preserved.

As Conrad Stoesz, archivist at Mennonite Heritage Archives in Winnipeg, said, "Each piece tells a story." The diaries and the doll are just some of the pieces he showed during a recent virtual tour of museums and archives dedicated to preserving Anabaptist-Mennonite stories.

TourMagination, which normally leads faith-based group tours to many destinations around the world with heritage and cultural interest to Mennonites, had to get creative while travel is on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Audrey Voth Petkau, the company's president, who is passionate about history, and Sandra Reimer, communications strategist, initiated a meeting with eight archive and museum leaders from Canada and the United States who are struggling to "keep the story alive" while their centres are closed to the public during the pandemic.

TourMagination, which celebrates its 50th anniversary in June, has now paired up with these heritage experts to host "The Anabaptist story lives on: Virtual museum and Archive tour," highlighting unique artifacts, photographs and documents



PHOTOS BY CONRAD STOESZ

The original diaries of Johannes D. Dyck (1826-1898) tell, among other things, the stories of his adventures in America, including an escape from an ambush during the California Gold Rush.

that are part of the Anabaptist-Mennonite story.

Reimer facilitates the online tours on Tuesday evenings in May and June. Each week archivists describe the features of their facilities and highlight some of the unique pieces of the story they house. There is time for participants to ask questions, and the virtual tours are recorded.

During the first tour, Stoesz discussed the importance of stories and how they can raise important questions and reflections.

He showed the diaries of Johannes D. Dyck (1826-1898), who left Prussia in 1846 to seek adventure in America, and got caught up in the California Gold Rush. And he showed the doll that Dyck's grandson, Johannes J. Dyck (1885-1948), used to smuggle money out of Russia.

Was this Johannes "a clever man who fooled officials?" Or was he greedy, putting his family and others desperate to flee Russia at risk? These are the interesting

and complicated questions that history invites people to ask, according to Stoesz.

In the second virtual tour, Richard Thiessen, executive director of the Mennonite Heritage Museum in Abbotsford, B.C., took his turn to help "connect and tell our stories" during the pandemic. Using several artifacts, he told the story of a Mennonite church in the Prussian/Polish village of Deutsch-Kazun that faced many transitions and tragedies from the time it was opened in 1834.

During the Second World War, the village was caught between warring sides. Hit by German shelling in September 1937, the church suffered severe damage. A half-dozen Mennonite homes were destroyed and seven Mennonites were killed. The Polish army, suspicious of German-speaking Mennonites, arrested and executed eight men and incarcerated the rest of them.

Within a matter of days, the Germans released the men. A stamp with a swastika on one of the church documents indicates that the Third Reich ruled the region for a time before the Soviet army advanced. Just before the village was overrun by the Soviet army in 1945, the last minister of the church had the foresight to grab several items from the church, bundle them together and carry them with him to Germany, and eventually to Canada.

In his virtual tour, Thiessen showed the church registers, communion cups, plate and tablecloth that the last minister rescued in order to "preserve the story of the church." One of the registers was damaged by a shell from the initial German attack. Thiessen posed the questions, if people today had to flee on short notice, "would we take anything from church, and, if so, what would we take?"

In describing the role of archives and museums, Thiessen said, “We want to tell the story.”

These virtual tours offer participants a window into the unique artifacts that can help to do just that.

Future virtual tours will visit the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Winnipeg, and the Mennonite Archives of Ontario in Waterloo, Ont., as well as make stops in Lancaster and Harleysville, Pa., Hillsboro, Kan., and Freeman, S.D. The complete list of tours, information on how to register, and links to recordings from past stops can be found at tourmagination.com/vtour/.

TourMagination anticipates resuming its regular tours in 2021, or whenever the World Health Organization deems it safe to do so. Reimer said that tourism provides important income for many communities it visits around the globe. ¶



In the doll that Johannes J. Dyck (1885-1948) gave his daughter, he hid money and smuggled it past guards as he and his family escaped Russia by train in 1927.

/// #COVIDkindness

‘Kind gesture . . . greatly appreciated’



A volunteer packs food boxes as part of the MAC Give Waterloo food-sharing program.

WATERLOO REGION, ONT.—In mid-March, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Waterloo Region chapter of the Muslim Association of Canada (MAC) approached MennoHomes, a provider of affordable rental housing in Waterloo Region, as it was about to set up a local food-share program during Ramadan called MAC Give Waterloo. The offer was to provide a hot meal one day a week for seniors in the community upon request, and to offer help with grocery pickup for those who prefer to stay at home during the pandemic. The program began the last week of March. People could call on Wednesdays for meal delivery on Thursday. Several tenants at Rockway Gardens Village in Kitchener requested meals multiple times. The meals were donated to MAC Give Waterloo by local restaurants that serve Middle Eastern and Indian cuisines. Organizer Aycha Tammour says that, after running for a month, the program is being evaluated by MAC to assess its success and potential future. “This kind gesture by the Muslim Association of Canada has been greatly appreciated by tenants and staff at MennoHomes,” says Dan Driedger, executive director of MennoHomes.

—MENNOHOMES

/// News brief

MWC publishes *Courier* by email only

Courier *Correo* **Courier**



WATERLOO, ONT.—“This is an extraordinary time we are living in, but we remain confident that Jesus Christ is our hope, no matter what life brings,” says César García, the general secretary of Mennonite World Conference (MWC). Due to the global economic slowdown and the challenges of moving mail around the world while nearly all countries are in lockdown, MWC leaders made the difficult decision not to print and mail the April 2020 issue of *Courier* that focuses on ecumenical dialogue. Instead, it is available for download at mwc-cmm.org/article/courier, or by emailing info@mwc-cmm.org to request a pdf version. The April 20 issue features the teaching resource, “A theology of interchurch hospitality and denominational identity,” approved by the General Council in 2018; stories from around the world of local ecumenical relations; a profile of the Anabaptist church in the Caribbean region and of the Global Anabaptist Service Network; and Assembly News No. 3. “We apologize to our readers that they are not receiving this issue in print, as they are accustomed,” says Elina Ciptadi, interim communications officer. “Many subscribers are able to receive an electronic copy, but some will miss having a print copy.”

—MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE

'We are in this together'

Jubilee Fund continues to support Indigenous initiatives

By Will Braun
Senior Writer

In 1990, as the 500th anniversary of Columbus's arrival on this side of the Atlantic loomed, Mennonites felt compelled to do something tangible. The Conference of Mennonites in Canada (CMC) formally resolved to work with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada, which was already exploring the establishment of a Jubilee Fund.

The intent of the fund was, according to a CMC resolution, to "express to the Native people of Canada our gratitude for their generosity in sharing their land with us and our ancestors; and acknowledge the way in which Native people repeatedly and consistently have been thwarted in their endeavour to have access to their rightful lands and their unique status."

The original vision included a focus on "areas where Mennonites have directly benefitted from the treaty process," and where commitments to Indigenous communities had not been honoured. The resolution said each family in the conference "would be invited to contribute toward this fund."

Such a fund was indeed established, in discussion with several Indigenous organizations. The tri-fold focus was education (bursaries for Indigenous students), advocacy (particularly related to unmet treaty land commitments), and concrete projects.

Today, \$109,000 sits in the Jubilee Fund, with the interest it gains distributed annually to Indigenous initiatives.

One of the current recipients is the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre, an

Indigenous ministry training centre on 15 wooded hectares near Beausejour, Man.

It is receiving money for its Mamawe Ota Askikh (Sharing Life Together Here on Earth) program. The program, which started in 2017, combines the centre's gardening efforts with a vision for bringing together Indigenous and non-Indigenous people around food preparation and land-based skills. The result has been an annual week-long gathering in which people from various backgrounds and parts of the country might be found preparing animal hides side by side, processing wild rice together or smoking fish.

Shoon Keewatin of Grassy Narrows (Asubpechoseewagong) First Nation, in northwestern Ontario, has provided some of the traditional land-based knowledge.

"We stumbled into a mode of reconciliation work that is not talk-based," says Marcus Rempel, a Mennonite who lives near the centre and has been part of facilitating the program since the beginning. "We got our bodies moving in parallel," he says. This led to relationships that, he says, felt "genuine and enlivening."

Adrian Jacobs, who serves as keeper of the circle at the centre, talks about the healing nature of people being together and reconnecting with the land. In a phone interview, he also highlighted how lessons from the program have been incorporated into the centre's work with families, couples, moms and dads.

In addition to training ministers from Indigenous communities, the centre does a range of healing work, including family reunification initiatives for families involved with the provincial Child and Youth Services.

Jacobs is hoping that this year's gathering, planned for August, can still proceed, although that remains unclear because of COVID-19 restrictions on gatherings. The Jubilee Fund contribution supports travel and registration fees for Indigenous participants.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LEONARD DOELL

The initial fundraiser for the Jubilee Fund asked people to fill special tubes with 92 loonies.

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advert@canadianmennonite.org

Today, \$109,000 sits in the Jubilee Fund, with the interest it gains distributed annually to Indigenous initiatives.

The fund continues to be administered by MCC Canada and Mennonite Church Canada, the successor of CMC.

The selection committee includes Ruth Plett, MCC Canada's national program director; Steve Heinrichs, who heads Indigenous-Settler Relations for MC Canada; and two Indigenous people invited by Plett and Heinrichs.

Usually \$5,000 to \$7,000 is handed out annually, often split between two recipients. In the past, the fund has contributed to genealogical work, equipment for mapping of traditional territory, Métis seed saving, wild salmon advocacy, gardening initiatives and many other projects from coast to coast.

Plett acknowledges both the value of the work supported by the fund, as well as the fact that it is a "drop in the bucket" in terms of the overall need. She sees obvious value in giving money directly to Indigenous-led grassroots organizations, while also saying that it is "important not to pretend it is bigger than it is," and "not just pat ourselves on the back."

Heinrichs salutes the Mennonite elders who enacted the vision for the Jubilee Fund in the early '90s. "It must have taken a lot of courage," he says of their bold words about inequity around land. For him, the spirit of the fund is to say that education is not enough in response to injustice: "We gotta share tangible material resources."

He welcomes further donations to the fund. "Giving to the Jubilee Fund is a tangible opportunity to work for healing justice," he says. "We can't resolve the land question, but we can put our hearts and resources into the circle, and show that we are in this together." ❧

For more information, visit mennonitechurch.ca/jubilee-fund.



News brief

AMBS accreditation reaffirmed through 2029



PHOTO BY PETER RINGENBERG

The Wadsworth Bell on the AMBS campus.

ELKART, IND.—Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) has been accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) for the next decade. As AMBS has done every 10 years since 1958, in 2018-19, the seminary gave an extensive accounting of its work and hosted a campus visit for a team of accreditors to assess its compliance with the ATS Commission Standards and Procedures. These standards are used to measure the quality of theological education among approximately 170 ATS theological schools in Canada and the United States. The ATS evaluation committee highlighted four "distinctive strengths" it observed at AMBS as part of the evaluation process:

- **A cohesive group** of faculty members who collectively carry the ethos of the school, and a hard-working administration and staff who are committed to the welfare of the seminary.
- **The development** of organizational structures that foster transparency and shared governance to a rare degree in institutional life.
- **A deeply held** institutional commitment to intercultural competence and the dismantling of institutionalized racism as an embodiment of justice- and peace-making.
- **A spirit of courage**, creativity and experimentation that enables the school to try new endeavours while closing those that should not be continued.

—AMBS

News brief

CMU is Climate Smart certified



Julene Sawatzky poses with a sign affirming CMU is Climate Smart certified for 2020.

WINNIPEG—On Earth Day 2020 (April 22), Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) became officially Climate Smart certified. This certification marks a significant milestone in CMU's effort to address its role in climate change and sets the university on a path towards continuous improvement in the stewardship of the resources, people and planet entrusted to its care. Climate Smart certification is based on a quantified commitment to greenhouse-gas-emissions reduction. To become certified, CMU was required to identify and measure its overall greenhouse-gas-emissions footprint and, based on that data, develop an action plan with emission-reduction strategies in the areas of heating, transportation and electricity over the coming period. CMU's pursuit of this designation began in 2018, initiated by James Magnus-Johnston of the CMU Centre for Resilience, and was brought to fruition this year by Julene Sawatzky, campus planning and facilities development manager. "Being Climate Smart certified means we understand and are tracking our greenhouse-gas emissions from year to year, such that we can now actively work together with students, staff, faculty and the broader community to find inventive avenues toward being more responsible stewards of creation," Sawatzky says.

—CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY

PEOPLE

The movies that have shaped us

Mennonites share their most formative films

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent

The coronavirus pandemic has shut down concert venues and sports stadiums. Even movie theatres have locked their doors. Over the past several months, many people have found themselves stuck at home with more free time and a new Netflix subscription. Six Mennonites talk about the films that have been formative in their lives:

• **Mackenzie Nicolle** of Home Street Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, has produced many short films and recently created a movie bracket for Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) students.



**Mackenzie
Nicolle**

“One of my favourite movies of all time is *The Great Debaters*, which is about a team of young African-American university students who are on the debate team for Wiley College during the 1930s and end up being the first black college to debate Harvard. . . . The characters spend time debating how the time for change is always now, and that doing what is right isn’t always doing what is easy or expected of you. In times when I feel like I don’t have the power to change much, this movie helps provide some hope and some fire.”

• **Gerhard Epp** of Douglas Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, watches more than a hundred movies every year.



**Gerhard
Epp**

“My favourite movie is *Field of Dreams*. . . . It’s about a guy that hears a voice that tells him, ‘Build it, they will come.’ Ultimately it is a man’s yearning to have had a better relationship with his father than he did. The movie came out in ’88. . . . In ’92, my father passed away very suddenly, and . . . by that time I had three little boys. And once he passed away

I realized all of the things that I wish I could talk to him about being a father. . . . Once the kids were a little bit older, we would watch it once a year regularly together, and most often it would be on Father’s Day. . . . My daughters-in-law now are part of this tradition.”

• **Emily Hamm** of Hope Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, is a CMU communications and media grad who loves to discuss films.



**Emily
Hamm**

“One of my favourite movies of all time is *Beasts of the Southern Wild*. . . . The movie follows Hushpuppy as she tries to live, care for those around her, and save her home amid climate catastrophe, illness and poverty. It’s a peculiar and feverish story that is both vague enough to be about everything, and specific enough to be completely alienating. . . . It was one of my first introductions to the idea that mysteries are valuable even when unsolved, which would eventually go on to shape some of the most foundational ways that I view Scripture.”

• **Vic Thiessen** of St. Croix Church, Saint Stephen, N.B., reviewed movies for *Canadian Mennonite* for more than 10 years and continues to run a film blog with his brother.



**Vic
Thiessen**

“When I was nine years old, a film was released that took the Mennonite world by storm, and me with it. Suddenly it was okay for Mennonites to go to the cinema. I am referring to *The Sound of Music*. . . . [It] is, for me, all about standing up to the worst darkness humanity can produce, and facing it not with bombs and bullets, but with music and laughter and joy . . . and compassion and trust in the light of God.”

• **Mandy Elliott** of Hope Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, is assistant professor of English and film studies at Booth University College.



**Mandy
Elliott**

“One movie that I come back to all the time is *Rear Window* by Alfred Hitchcock. It’s one that reminds me of being with my grandmother. It’s about this photojournalist stuck in his apartment. He has a broken leg from a recent scoop, and he looks out his window at his neighbours for fun. . . . It really reinforces the idea of the dangers of voyeurism and how you basically never know what other people have going on. . . . It’s cautionary meets exciting, it’s human-nature exposé.”

• **Reg Wiebe** of First Mennonite Church, Edmonton, is assistant professor of English at Concordia University of Edmonton.



Reg Wiebe

“A movie that has been formative in my life . . . is Michel Gondry’s *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. . . . A guy undergoes a medical treatment to erase the memories of a bad break-up, but the movie is about how our choices and memories constitute us. Remove a regret or a sadness and you unravel yourself. . . . I continue to come back to this movie’s acceptance of struggle not as futile but as fundamental in its wisdom and empathy.” ❧

The interviews were edited for length.

**‘Suddenly it was okay
for Mennonites to
go to the cinema.’
(Vic Thiessen)**

MC Alberta says farewell to communications coordinator, clown

By Joanne De Jong
Alberta Correspondent
CALGARY

Mennonite Church Alberta is sad to say goodbye this summer to June Miller. Not only has she served the regional church as its first communications coordinator, she has also used her clowning gifts to bring joy to her congregation, Foothills Mennonite Church, as well as to the MC Alberta community.

A graduate of the Ohio Clown School and of Kent State University, with a master's degree in theatre arts, she has always loved using her creativity to bless. After serving for three years with a Youth with a Mission drama team that travelled throughout the United States, she chose to volunteer an additional three years in Russia.

Upon return to the States, she married Pastor Chad Miller. In 2009, the family moved to Calgary, where he was to serve as Foothills' associate pastor.

Miller, not sure what to expect in Canada, was especially nervous about Canada's health-care system, having heard a lot of scary stories. She learned new words like "chesterfield" and posted pictures of her new home, an igloo, on Facebook for her American friends. In 2015, she finally became a dual citizen and celebrated her Canadian citizenship by promptly going to Tim Horton's and ordering a maple-glazed donut.

The last 11 years have been full of ministry and memories. For nine years, she directed the junior-high group in Foothills' Christmas plays. A favourite memory was when Levi Klassen learned to juggle plates for the performance. On another occasion they spoofed the Christmas song, "Deck the Halls," singing "Fa la la la, Falafel house!"

Miller was part of the original team that started a church ministry called WISK, which stands for Women, Intergenerational, for Seniors to Kids. Activities included cooking demonstrations, murder mysteries and strawberry teas. She also helped direct Vacation Bible School and

she was part of the drive to encourage more women to attend the annual MC Alberta women's retreat. She served on the planning committee and entertained the women as "Jungle June" for many years, as well as organizing improv games.

In the community, she worked as



PHOTO BY MACKENZIE MILLER

Sassafrass, aka June Miller, sells Tupperware in costume.

a theatre history instructor at Rocky Mountain College and a drama teacher at Bearspaw Christian School, where she directed the annual spring production.

Side jobs included working children's birthday parties and even selling Tupperware while in costume as the character "Sassafrass." She explains that "Sassafrass is an entre-manuer. She used to sell Mary Kay, but has now developed her own line called "Cow-Patti Cosmetics." It just does wonders for your 'pours!'"

Miller says that, in 2017, she finally landed her dream job as the regional church's communications coordinator. "Leaving will be a huge loss for me," she says. "I love being part of something bigger

than myself. I was the first person to hold this position, so, for the next month, I can still say that I'm the best there has ever been. Being the first gave me the opportunity to explore, create, experiment and shape the role."

Miller says that when she was a little girl, she dreamed of being in advertising. "I imagined creating billboards with every one saying, 'June made that!'"

Now her life has come full circle, with her creating websites and media materials for MC Alberta. "I love the work and I love the people," she says. "It's so rare to get both."

Brenda Tiessen-Wiens, moderator of MC Alberta, expresses how much she appreciates Miller, saying, "June is a trailblazer and will really be missed!"

According to church member Michelle Copithorne, "June is one in a million and her creative spirit is a true joy to experience. She has always brought life and humour to any of the events that she was involved in, and her inclusive and caring spirit made anyone she came in contact with feel truly valued. We are going to deeply miss her."

On March 12, the Millers announced via email that they were moving. Unfortunately, church was closed that Sunday, so, after 11 years at Foothills, they are disappointed because they are not able to say goodbye in person to so many they have loved.

The Millers' last Sunday serving at Foothills will be July 12. Chad has accepted a position as senior pastor at Ridgeway Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va.; his position begins on Aug. 1, but they are leaving two weeks early to give them time to be in quarantine before starting their new ministry. June will look for work upon arrival.

Their two children, Mackenzie and Hudson, will be attending Eastern Mennonite School, which adjoins the Eastern Mennonite University campus. ❧

#COVIDKINDNESS



PHOTO BY TRUDY KRAHN

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Chelsey Siemens, a pianist at Fiske (Sask.) Mennonite Church, has begun playing hymns from her deck on Sunday mornings. People are invited to walk or drive by and listen while physically distancing themselves from each other.

ServiceLinks

Advertisers on this page may designate a 1/6 page ad to a charity of their choice. To learn more: advert@canadianmennonite.org

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/// Staff change

MCC Alberta announces new interim executive director



Dale Taylor was appointed as the new interim executive director of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)

Alberta, effective May 1, 2020. She will serve for an 18-month term. Taylor has considerable leadership and management experience, having served as executive director at the Centre for Newcomers in Calgary and as associate executive director at MCC Canada, among other roles. MCC Alberta board chair Rob Enns has been serving as acting interim executive director since Dec. 5, 2019, following the departure of former executive director Thomas Caldwell. As Taylor assumes the executive-director role, Enns will resume his role as MCC Alberta board chair and Edwin Dening will resume his role as vice-chair of the board.

—MCC ALBERTA



ONLINE NOW!

at canadianmennonite.org



Remembering Helen Martens

Friends and colleagues reflect on the legacy of Helen Martens, Conrad Grebel University College's first music faculty member, who passed away recently at the age of 92.

canadianmennonite.org/helenmartens



Ways to sing together during online worship

Voices Together committee members have put together a list of tips and songs for singing in online worship.

canadianmennonite.org/songsuggestions



On staying safe

Lethbridge Mennonite Church pastor Ryan Dueck reflects on the phrase "stay safe" on the CM blog.

canadianmennonite.org/blog/rd-safe



Watch: Quarantine viewing ideas

Looking for a movie to watch? An English professor from Canadian Mennonite University has some suggestions.

canadianmennonite.org/video/sorensen



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

The program includes:

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

FIND OUT MORE:
Visit amsb.ca/explore

Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service seeks candidates to be on our board. Rather than engage in a formal nomination process, we're trying to build a pool of potential candidates from Canadian Mennonite churches.

If you can see yourself volunteering your perspective and experience to one of Canada's most successful independent church publications, let us know. Or, if you can think of someone else who could contribute, encourage that person to apply! A broad and diverse spectrum of perspectives stimulates good discussion and creativity.

Skills in journalism, small business or communication technologies, for example, would be particularly valuable to us.

To learn more, please email Art Koop at arturos.treasure@gmail.com or Ken Reddig at kenwr2174@gmail.com.



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Last year **821 million people** faced hunger around the world

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Since 1983, as the founding member of the Foodgrains Bank, Mennonite Central Committee Canada has worked with other Christian organizations to help end world hunger. Through MCC's account at the Foodgrains Bank, compassionate Canadians like you have made it possible to provide emergency food to refugees fleeing conflict, train small-scale farmers to grow more food for their families, and help mothers improve their children's nutrition.

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Photo: Edward Echwalu

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Calendar

British Columbia

Oct. 16-18: MC B.C. women's retreat. Theme: "God is bigger." Speakers: Karina Loewen and Nichole Forbes of "We Should Record this Podcast." More information to follow.

Manitoba

Nov. 6-7: Canadian launch of new "Voices Together" hymnal, at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, from mid-afternoon on Nov. 6 to the evening of Nov. 7, when a community-wide worship fest will be held. Registration will be required. More details to follow.

Ontario

June 20: Aylmer Mennonite Charity Auction, at the Aylmer Curling Club, opens at 8 a.m. Live auction from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Activities for children, large-scale food festival, haircuts. For more information, call Katie Miller at 519-765-0075. Funds

go to MCC projects worldwide. **June 27:** MennoHomes "Out-spok'n for Affordable Housing" bike-a-thon, a virtual fundraising event. Hikers, recreational bikers and avid cyclists will choose their own routes this year. For more information, call Dan Driedger at 226-476-2535 or visit mennohomes.com.

Aug. 9-21: Ontario Mennonite Music Camp at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, for youth ages 12 to 16. To register, visit grebel.ca/ommc. Refunds will be provided if the camp is cancelled.

Sept. 19: Toronto Mennonite Festival, at Black Creek Pioneer Village, opens at 10 a.m. Activities include Mennonite food booths, crafts, games, music and a quilt auction. Funds go to MCC projects worldwide.

Oct. 17: A one-day New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale, at the New Hamburg fairgrounds.

For more Calendar listings online, visit canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar.



Classifieds

Employment Opportunities



**Employment Opportunity
Communications Coordinator, .5 FTE**

MCA is a close-knit community of twelve congregations joined by faith in Christ in a Mennonite perspective. We seek a Communications Coordinator who is a self-starter with strengths in preparing written materials, collaborative work and creative initiative. Skills in working with social media, websites, and the ability to create promotional materials are essential.

For a full job description, see mcab.ca/careers. Inquiries and resumes may be directed to moderator@mcab.ca.

Mennonite Fellowship of Montreal

Employment Opportunity
Pastor (0.5 FTE), start date: August 2020

The Mennonite Fellowship of Montreal is a small, diverse and welcoming congregation in the heart of Montreal. Being the only English Mennonite church in the area, participants come from many parts of Montreal and beyond. With four universities nearby, we are invigorated by students who make MFM their church home while in Montreal.

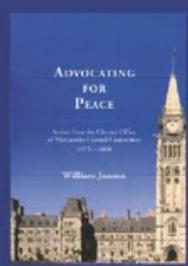
The Fellowship is searching for a half-time pastor, as our current pastor is retiring (summer 2020). Responsibilities include giving a meditation two Sundays per month, pastoral care and working with the elders group and church council as our congregation seeks God together in the context of this lively city.

To learn more go to mcec.ca/ministry-opportunities or contact pastoraltransitions@mcec.ca.

mfmntl.org



For Sale



Fresh off the press

Bill Janzen was the first director of Mennonite Central Committee's Ottawa Office. In this book, he shares a rich collection of stories from 33 years of "advocating for peace."

Ray Funk, Member of Parliament, 1988 – 1993; said, "I stayed in close contact with Bill Janzen... coming to value his wisdom and experience, and considering him the single most influential person in shaping my work." *Canadian Mennonite*, November 10, 2014

Book available through www.CommonWord.ca/go/1954

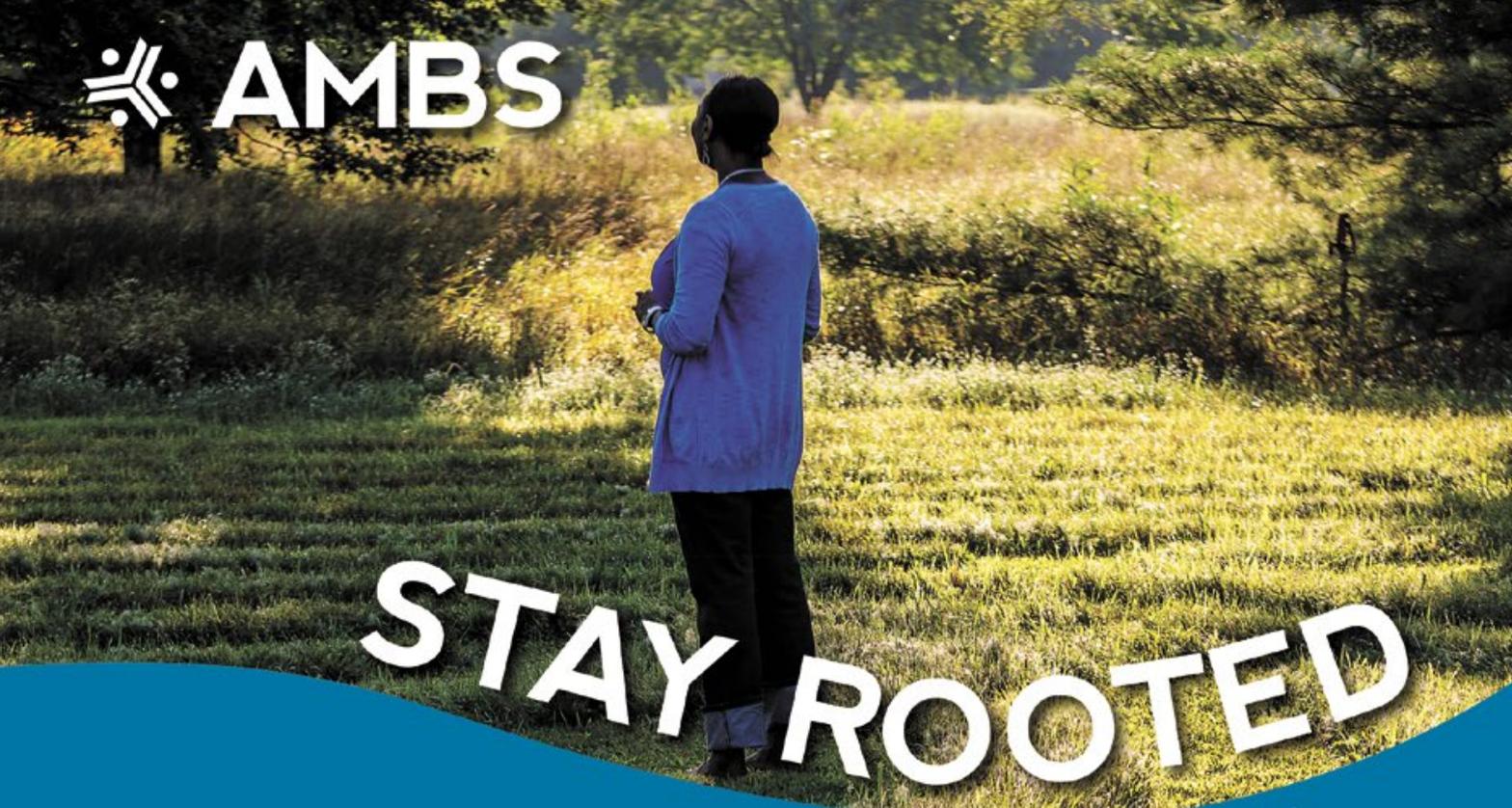
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