

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

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Special Mental Health Issue

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your heart  
and mind pg. 4



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## EDITORIAL

## A living death

DICK BENNER  
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

He is more than my spouse and partner of 54 years. She was my soul mate; the person whose love and devotion never faltered; the one to whom I turned for counsel, for wisdom and for comfort.

But now those dynamic dimensions are gone. My wife Marlene was diagnosed with dementia more than two years ago and is now in the hands of caregivers at a long-term care facility in Virginia. Our youngest daughter, Lisa, visits her frequently to stay in touch and to give her a sense of family. My grief is deep and troubling. While I visit her once a month while living in Canada, I feel that half of my life is gone, too.

The house is haunting when I return from work. The wall hangings, decorations and furnishings are constant reminders of the person who artfully filled the home with her classic décor and photos of family from generations past. It is a home without a voice, without a personality pervading the environment. Rooms ring hollow without the presence of the hostess, and an emptiness pervades and tortures my spirit.

The fact that her disease is degenerative is even more depressing. This is development in reverse. As a child develops, her brain expands and physical ability increases as she reaches adolescence and adulthood. Dementia reverses that process. Marlene will become more like an infant as time progresses.

My journey of grief led me into a tunnel of despair for several months. Watching her deteriorate one brain cell at a time sent me into an extended dark period, despite the reaching-out of close



friends, family and a small group at church, who, at the initiative of my pastor, surrounded us with love and support, which included taking Marlene out to lunch or taking her on country drives.

Their sensitivity to her—and to me trying to cope with this new reality—was and is wondrously sustaining. I felt the power of prayer like never before. But there came a point when I felt I had to withdraw and take this journey alone. During the long winter evenings, I just sat by the fire and engaged memories of life in the past, the good times and the challenges—all the while listening to the classics: Bach, Mozart, Beethoven—music that couched those memories in the strains of orchestral selections that are enduring and beautiful. It nurtured my spirit in the midst of great loss.

Tears flowed frequently while reaching back in my memory to those times when two spirits blended into one as we faced all that life threw at us: the times of the physical reverses of cancer for both of us and a death threat from the Mafia when I exposed their operations through newspapers we owned in central Pennsylvania.

I recalled, too, the joys of those intimate moments at the adoption of our two children, the birth of our two

granddaughters, the warmth of fellowship of small groups from various congregations, the support and engagement of congregations of which we were a part in some 14 different settings in the U.S. and Canada.

I took pleasure in the visual arts Marlene initiated at the Park View congregation in Harrisonburg, Va., and at Waterloo North in Ontario. She had a gift of enriching worship with the use of flowers, plants and appropriate art pieces that pointed to the Creator.

You might say this was all a bit of self-therapy. Grieving the loss of a spouse to dementia is a form of mental illness to which the church should pay attention. I have never been clinically depressed, but this new reality sent me into a tailspin that tested the strength and health of my mind and emotions. I lost weight and my energy level lowered considerably.

I am slowly facing a new reality, but it encompasses a living death, or what one of my friends describes as a “marathon funeral.” I am thankful that my family, close friends and the church continue to be there for me. This is a new ministry for the church in an aging population. Pastors and congregants will learn new ways of supporting.

They can do such things as my friends Ken Seitz, a retired pastor, and his wife Audrey do, visiting Marlene weekly and taking communion with her once a month. These are the gifts the church has to offer. Bless them for doing these acts of kindness.

## ABOUT THE COVER:

**‘I learned that mental illness runs in my family, so I come by this quite honestly. It has been a long road back and it’s not like I am completely free of anxiety. I will always live with a tendency towards it,’ writes Angelika Dawson in our Focus on Mental Health Feature, ‘Guard your heart and mind,’ on page 4. Read more about mental health on pages 17 to 22, and 35 to 37.**

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member of the  
Canadian Church Press



FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH FEATURE

# Guard your heart and mind

BY ANGELIKA DAWSON

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE



*I learned that mental illness runs in my family, so I come by this quite honestly. It has been a long road back and it's not like I am completely free of anxiety. I will always live with a tendency towards it.*

I memorized Philippians 4:4-9 more than 20 years ago when I was on bed rest during my pregnancy with my son Aaron. I had lost three babies before him—and one after him—so pregnancy for me was an obvious cause for anxiety.

If truth be known, I am actually a professional worrier, so passages like this one sometimes feel like they were written specifically for me: Hey, Angelika! Quit worrying, start praying. Be thankful; guard your heart and mind.

But I have also found this passage frustrating because it sounds so trite. Bobby McFerrin could have written its soundtrack: “Don’t worry, be happy.” If only it were that easy.

To be fair, when Paul wrote this letter, he wasn’t addressing people with debilitating mental illness. His words were meant to be an encouragement to a church facing persecution: Don’t be anxious. Pray. Focus your thoughts on positive things and learn from me and each other. In this sense, I have learned much from Paul on my journey with mental health.

## **My experience**

My journey began in 2009 while sitting in the dentist’s chair. I don’t have a fear of dentists; I actually really like mine and trust him completely. In his office, it’s routine for patients to put a pair of clear glasses on, to protect our eyes. But on this particular day, when the assistant put those glasses on me, I suddenly felt like I couldn’t breathe. My heart was pounding, trying to leap out of my chest. My arms and legs were tense. I had a death grip on the arm hold of the dentist’s chair. And in my head I was saying to myself, “What is the matter with you? You’re fine!” Only my body didn’t feel fine at all.

What I learned later was that I had experienced a panic attack brought on by anxiety.

The dictionary defines anxiety as “a feeling of worry, nervousness or unease, typically brought about by an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome.”

People often experience a general state of worry or even fear before confronting something challenging, like a test, an interview or even a dentist appointment. These feelings are easily justified and considered normal.

Anxiety as a form of mental illness occurs when a reaction is out of proportion to what might be normally expected in a situation. My experience was anything but normal. I felt like I was dying, but clearly I wasn’t. That panic attack was the first of several that I would have in the months to follow.

Over time I stopped sleeping. I developed claustrophobia. I felt



*'Hear my prayer,' by Linda Klippenstein.*

closed in when driving my car. I couldn't sleep in our bedroom because the window was too small. Soon I stopped sleeping at all. My anxiety became so severe that my body began to shut down. My stomach stopped producing acid and I couldn't digest my food. I lost nearly 10 kilograms in a month.

My doctor helped me a lot. She helped me understand that mental illness is treatable—just like cancer or diabetes. She gave me medication that enabled me to sleep. She encouraged me to visit a naturopath, who helped me solve the

problem with my digestion.

I also met with a Christian counsellor who helped me examine the cause of my anxiety in the context of my faith. This was paradigm-shifting for me. She helped me to re-imagine God as one who loves me deeply, rather than one who is waiting to test my faith at every turn. She gave me practical tools that I still use when I feel anxiety creeping into my life again.

I learned that mental illness runs in my family, so I come by this quite honestly. It has been a long road back and it's not like I'm completely free of anxiety. I will

always live with a tendency towards it.

I also have to acknowledge that my experience is unique to me. Some may have similar stories, but I know that others experience mental health challenges quite

*I also met with a Christian counsellor who helped me examine the cause of my anxiety in the context of my faith.*

differently. I was never hospitalized or medicated for my anxiety. But for some, psychiatric wards and medication are a necessary part of the journey towards mental wellness. But my story serves to tell us that this can happen to anyone without warning and sometimes with what appears to be no obvious cause.

I share my story in light of the text in Philippians because this has been a significant passage of Scripture for me, one that I have both wrestled with and found profoundly encouraging.

### **Pray**

*"Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6).*

The painting at left was created by Linda Klippenstein, who uses her talents to engage people with social issues in life. This painting is entitled "Hear my prayer," and this is what she says:

"The kneeling figure here is crying out in prayer. Broad, aggressive strokes made with a pallet knife communicate the turmoil in which the figure sits and pleads. It seems to be a harsh, even violent reality. Yet in the midst of the turmoil there is light—streams of light. It is these that invoke the conversation: the plea is being made, it is also being heard, and God is responding. . . .

"I see myself in this painting. When I go back and read my journals from this period in my life, they are filled with prayers begging God to heal me. My

**(Continued on page 10)**

# Living with 'invisible' illness

*Talking about mental health in the context of worship*

by Angelika Dawson



*Amelia at the Communitas office*

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.—If you were to meet Amelia you'd never guess. Her sunny smile lights up a room. She invites you in with the warmth of her personality. Her demeanour is one of confidence. Her handshake is firm. So you'd never guess. Never guess that she has struggled with mental illness.

"Mental illness is an invisible one," Amelia explains. "You can't tell just by looking at someone that they may have experienced severe mental illness. That's why, every chance I get to tell my story, I'm excited to do it. It's an opportunity to raise awareness."

Mental illness can affect anyone. Statistics tell us that 20 percent of Canadians will

experience mental illness in their lifetime. It affects all of us at some time, whether personally, through a family member, a friend or colleague. That means we share our pews with people who are living this experience. Yet, because of the stigma that surrounds it and the culture of victory that pervades our places of worship, many who are affected by mental illness do so in silence.

Communitas Supportive Care Society is hoping to change this. Communitas is a Christian faith-based organization that serves people who live with developmental disabilities and mental health challenges. Our hope is that people of all abilities can live full and rewarding lives and, for those who identify as people of faith, participate fully in their places of worship.

In spring of 2014, Communitas celebrated Mental Health Awareness week in part by telling Amelia's story. The response we received was overwhelming. Some of the important feedback came from pastors who said, "we need to talk about this more in our churches."

As a result of this feedback, Communitas has created a worship resource for churches to help us talk about mental illness in the context of worship. *God of all Comfort* includes a variety of elements that worship leaders and pastors can choose from and incorporate into the context of their own service: prayers, readings, a readers theatre, song suggestions, sermon prompts and more.

The material was tested by a number of churches in B.C., and their feedback was used to fine-tune it. Emmanuel Mennonite

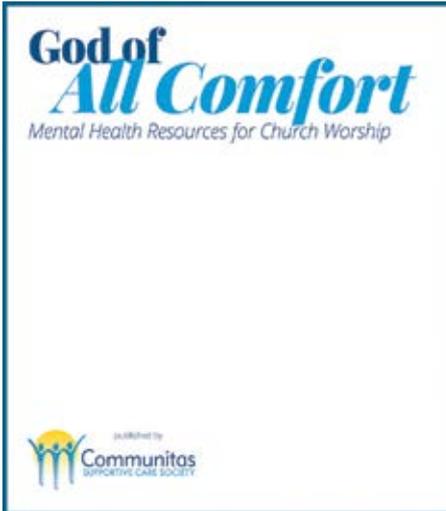


*Communion table display at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, on mental health Sunday*

Church in Abbotsford was one of these churches. Using the feedback form included in the materials, Pastor April Yamasaki talked about the effectiveness of the material as it was used in their Sunday morning worship as well as with a small group. The response from leaders and congregants was positive. April wrote:

"I've mentioned the one in five Canadian statistic before, and in my sermon this time I said that, given our average attendance of 220, that would be 44 people. Afterward, a young woman in our congregation sent me a message saying 'I am one of the 44.' She found the service very encouraging and had even listened to my sermon a second time since she had been having a hard few days."

Clearly, there is a need to bring this topic



Download a free pdf copy of “God of all Comfort” at [CommunitasCare.com/stories](http://CommunitasCare.com/stories).

out into the open, but why is it so difficult for us to talk about this? Amelia’s story might offer some clues.

Several years ago, Amelia was what many might call a typical—if over-achieving— young woman. She was in school full time working on her counselling degree. She worked two jobs while doing her internship. She volunteered at a Christian camp on weekends. Things were going well, but self-care was not a priority.

Looking back, Amelia says she struggled with depression even as a teenager but she dealt with it by keeping busy. But it was after graduating from college that things took a turn for the worse.

“I stopped sleeping. I started having what I thought were spiritual experiences—‘signs and wonders,’” she says. “Then the voices and messages started getting dark.”

She began to have severe anxiety and lost touch with reality—there are whole periods of time that she doesn’t remember. Her family sought help for her and she was admitted to hospital, with acute psychosis. It was here that she had to confront her own misconceptions and fears about mental illness.

“I didn’t know what ‘psychotic’ meant. I asked my mom if it meant that I was now in danger of killing people,” she recalls. “But

as I met other people just like me, I came to realize that this is just an illness — it’s not a statement about who I am or my character.” She was subsequently diagnosed with bipolar disorder.

Being labeled is both a blessing and a curse. An accurate diagnosis means you can get the specific help you need to begin the journey of recovery. But living with a label means people make assumptions when they hear terms like “psychotic depression” or “bipolar.” Just as people wouldn’t suspect by simply looking at her that she’s experienced mental illness, Amelia also doesn’t want people to make assumptions about her when they learn that she does.

“We’re people who have personalities, who have hopes and dreams. We’re capable people,” she says. “We are people just like you —we are you!”

Today Amelia is in a much better place. She knows what her triggers are and has a plan in place if things get challenging again. She is grateful for the support she has around her, especially her family that has seen her through the whole process and has loved her unconditionally. She works at Communitas, managing the Peer Support Worker program which supports others on their journey towards mental health.

Sharing her story is one way that Amelia works at breaking down barriers and fighting the stigma associated with mental illness. By creating space in the familiar context of our worship services to talk about mental illness, Amelia believes that we can remove the stigma

that surrounds it and learn how we can support one another towards mental health. Amelia hopes this resource will help someone who is struggling to seek help.

“For anyone out there who is struggling with mental health issues I can honestly say there is hope,” she says. “It may be dark now, but it can get better.”

The worship resource, *God of all Comfort*, which includes a link to April’s sermon and Amelia’s full story in print and on video, is offered at no cost for churches to use and can be found at [CommunitasCare.com/stories](http://CommunitasCare.com/stories).



*Walks in the forest are one way that Amelia stays mentally healthy. She finds them calming and peaceful.*

# Eden Brings Healing to Diverse Communities

WINKLER, MAN.—Eden Health Care Services offers a unique blend of leading edge mental health care, government service delivery, and Christian ministry. Owned by 10 Mennonite conferences, Eden serves as the main mental health care provider for the “Southern Health” region of Manitoba.

In collaboration with the regional health authority, the Winkler-based agency provides a range of services within an area that is home to 190,000 residents, including First Nations, Hutterite colonies, Francophone communities and Mennonites. Eden also provides services in Winnipeg.

While serving a broad range of people, Eden maintains its distinct faith character. The teachings and spirit of Christ remain

central to the vision, mission and values of Eden. “Jesus calls us to be healers and to be open to people such as those with mental illness,” says Eden board chair Evelyn Labun. Eden’s vision is to see that people on the mental health journey experience hope, healing and community.

The agency’s budget is over \$13 million, with nearly 100 full-time staff and another 80 part-time and casual workers. The bulk of funding comes from the province, though Eden CEO James Friesen says funds from churches often push projects from the idea stage to reality.

Eden’s five branches reflect its holistic approach and Mennonite-inspired common-sense practicality:

**1. Eden Mental Health Centre** is an acute

*Eden’s professional counsellors help people deal with depression, anxiety, grief, relationships and parenting challenges.*



*To hear people who use Eden’s services, watch the 22-minute mini-documentary at [edenhealthcare.ca/about/media](http://edenhealthcare.ca/about/media).*

care facility with 30 beds and 10 psychiatrists who provide inpatient care and work with community mental health teams.

**2. Pathways Community Mental Health** provides community-based support for people of all ages.

**3. Recovery of Hope** offers roughly 4,000 counselling sessions annually at seven locations.

**4. Segue Career Options** helps people with employment barriers prepare for and find employment.

**5. Eden Housing and Supports** provides nearly 200 affordable housing units in three communities, offering a range of supports for individuals and families.

## Doubt and mental illness

Mental illness can shake the core of a person’s being, including their faith. Sometimes the negative thought patterns brought on by mental illness clash with what religious teachings tell us should be going on in our minds. Mental illness can make people feel like failed Christians. This makes it especially risky for people to raise their struggles in church.

Friesen says sometimes the faith

community can help carry people's faith for them through the dark times. As a frontline worker for Eden in the 80s, Friesen recalls a client expressing anguish over her faith crisis. Friesen suggested to her that he and his colleagues would carry her faith for her while she went through that valley. She felt great relief.

While that form of support will not fit every case, it is one way to think about how church can support people. Understanding how mental illness affects people, and avoidance of judgement are always important when walking with those who are struggling.

### Roots in war and peace

Eden had a distinctly Anabaptist beginning. During the Second World War, some Mennonite conscientious objectors were assigned to psychiatric care facilities. They witnessed stark conditions at institutions which served largely as holding facilities. They also witnessed expressions of profound compassion. Their stories worked their way through to church leaders in various Mennonite conferences. Though it took some years, these stories led to the churches collectively opening Eden Mental Health Centre in Winkler in 1967.

Though Eden has grown, it continues to be owned and governed by Mennonite churches, including Mennonite Church Manitoba. That rootedness, and the ethos it brings, is something that Eden staff and board members seek to nurture. In this way, the community, through the Eden organization, can speak meaningfully into how mental health services are delivered, often to some of the most vulnerable or marginalized individuals in society.

Starting in 2015, Labun visited the leaders of the founding churches to reinvigorate the relationship with the community



*Annual "Tractor Treks" is one way Eden raises funds and nurtures important ties to the community.*

that forms Eden's solid foundation. Labun, who is a professor emeritus in nursing, expresses much appreciation for the board members that churches provide to Eden.

From its base in church and faith, Eden is finding ways to "relate to a multicultural, pluralistic society," as Labun puts it. She

points to the vision of healing in Hebrews 12 as her prayer for Eden:

"Therefore strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb that is lame may not be put out of joint but rather healed."

### What can you and the churches do?

- Just be a friend to someone with a mental illness or their family member. Don't overthink it. Don't leave it all to the professionals.
- Educate yourself generally about mental health.
- Create safe space within your church for mutual sharing and support. Many people bear the often-hidden weight and wounds of their own (or a loved one's) experience with mental illness.
- Invite a speaker from Eden or a similar agency.
- Donate to Eden Foundation or a similar agency.
- Volunteer at Eden or a similar agency in your area (Eden relies on volunteer drivers, accompanists for chapel services, dog therapy helpers, community drop-in, etc.).

**(Continued from page 5)**

thoughts were dark. My body was in pain. My spirit was filled with fear. I often felt unheard. Sometimes I had no words. I identify with the writer of Psalm 88: ‘O Lord, the God who saves, day and night I cry out before you . . . for my soul is full of trouble. . . . Why do you reject me and hide your face from me?’”

Still, I began to realize that being in prayer was making the difference. It is the act of prayer itself—the petitioning, listening, waiting, trusting—that begins the journey towards peace that guards your heart and mind. When I put into practice the tools that my counsellor gave me, and accepted God as my lover, not my judge, those prayers began to change. They moved from a focus on illness to a focus on wellness.

**What are you thinking?**

*“Whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things . . . and the peace of God be with you”* (Philippians 4:8,9b).

When you live with mental illness, the last thing you need is a cheerleader telling you to think positively. It’s right up there with someone telling you not to be anxious. Who chooses anxiety? Who chooses to think negative, fearful, angry thoughts?

Sometimes it was desperately hard to turn my mind away from the negative and towards the positive. For those whose thoughts become truly dark and even harmful, it may mean medication and extensive counselling to move towards wellness.

When I was going through the worst of my anxiety, I found that it mattered a great deal what I surrounded myself with. I love reading murder mysteries and watching dramatic movies, but when I was working through my illness I couldn’t do any of that. I read fluff novels and watched romantic comedies. Even my Bible reading was limited to the Psalms, which reminded me of God’s unfailing love. In a way, my heart and mind were telling me to put Paul’s encouragement

into practice! Today, I use mindfulness and meditation regularly to focus my thoughts in a healthy way.

**Learn from others**

*“Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me . . .”* (Philippians 4:9a).

I work for Communitas Supportive Care Society, an organization that has

that will help their clients toward wellness. Most often, it is simply the act of being with another in the midst of their challenges that is profoundly helpful.

This, then, is perhaps the greatest lesson I have learned from this text: I am a human being, not a human doing. While Paul’s words seem to form a task list—rejoice, pray, petition, give thanks, think positive—his encouragement is offered in

*Anxiety as a form of mental illness occurs when a reaction is out of proportion to what might be normally expected in a situation. My experience was anything but normal. I felt like I was dying, but clearly I wasn’t. That panic attack was the first of several that I would have in the months to follow.*

served people with developmental disabilities and mental health challenges since 1974. One of the most powerful programs that I have observed is that of our Peer Support Work. Those who have a lived experience of mental illness walk alongside those who are at the beginning of their journey. Peers understand exactly what the other is going through, but have the benefit of being further along the road. They can model the tools and the lifestyle

the context of being: be joyful, be gentle, be in prayer, be thankful. *“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard my heart and mind in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:7, paraphrased). ❧

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**/// For discussion**

1. How have you, or people you know, tried to cope with feelings of extreme anxiety or deep hopelessness? What has been helpful or not helpful in these situations? Do you agree that more discussion about mental health would be beneficial?
2. Why do we tend to be reluctant to share our mental health struggles with others? Do you agree with Angelika Dawson that having a diagnosis is both a blessing and a curse? How can we help each other talk more openly about these issues? How much of the stigma attached to mental illness is due to a lack of awareness or understanding?
3. Dawson says that she has learned she is a “human being, not a human doing.” Why is that distinction important? How much of our sense of self-worth is connected to what we can accomplish? Have you ever found Philippians 4:4-9 to be trite or frustrating?
4. What questions do you have about mental health? What could the church do to encourage all of us to protect and improve our mental health?

—BY BARB DRAPER

## VIEWPOINTS

## /// Readers write

We welcome your comments and publish most letters from subscribers. Letters, to be kept to 300 words or less, are the opinion of the writer only and are not to be taken as endorsed by this magazine or the church. Please address issues rather than individuals; personal attacks will not appear in print or online. In light of the many recent letters on the topic of sexuality, we will edit any letter on this topic to a paragraph and post the rest online at [www.canadianmennonite.org](http://www.canadianmennonite.org). All letters are edited for length, style and adherence to editorial guidelines. Send them to [letters@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:letters@canadianmennonite.org) and include the author's contact information and mailing address. Preference is given to letters from MC Canada congregants.

✉ Intent of *Star Wars* review is to criticize culture of violence

RE: "STAR WARS review promotes violence against women," April 11, page 11.

Thank you to Bev Hunsberger for alerting me to the different ways my article on *Star Wars* and Hollywood feminism can be viewed, even by likeminded people. She has helped me reconsider how best to communicate my thoughts on violence in film.

Her letter focussed on one particular sentence in my article and I admit that this sentence was poorly worded. Standing on its own, it can easily be misconstrued. I would therefore like to clarify its intent.

First, I believe that all human beings are inherently nonviolent, so this sentence is not based on any assumptions regarding the inherent nonviolence of women or the inherent violence of men.

(Continued on page 10)

## FROM OUR LEADERS

## Cultivating imagination

KAREN MARTENS ZIMMERLY

During the Second World War, guided by the leadership of Pastor André Trocmé, the village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon and surrounding regions hid Jews who were fleeing from the Nazis. A less well-known story of that era comes from the small Muslim country of Albania, where both the people and the government protected their own Jewish citizens and Jews fleeing from other parts of Europe at all costs. While the world was at war and the Nazi and Fascist regimes made scapegoats of their citizens of Jewish descent, these communities lived a different imagination. They resisted.



Closer to home, our indigenous neighbours live within the matrix of despairing communities of poverty and hopelessness—even as greater numbers of them reclaim indigenous spiritual and cultural practices as paths to individual healing and communal well-being. With growing

strength they are calling us, as schools and church, to become partners in the arduous journey towards developing a new imagination for how to live together as treaty people.

In the face of possibility and challenge, imagination is the open door before us, just as it has been for previous generations. And for those of us who identify with Mennonite Church Canada, cultivating imagination for what God is calling us to involves listening to God, listening to one another and listening to our neighbours.

This summer, youth and adults will gather for Assembly 2016 in Saskatoon with significant time focussed on discussion and decision-making about our future direction and the restructuring of our church body, as well as the Being a Faithful Church process. Just as important as any decisions we arrive at, is the question of how we will be God's people going forward after decisions are made. Worship and plenary teaching times will invite and challenge us to consider how

God is creating a covenant community that bears God's compassion in the way we make peace and do justice within the faith community, with the world beyond the faith community and with creation.

Safwat Marzouk, a professor at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, who will present two plenary sessions, says, "Although the story of the Old Testament centres on God's relation with the people of Israel, the story also involves Israel's neighbouring nations. . . . Through studying the biblical witness to the complex relation of inclusion and exclusion . . . and analyzing how these traditions have influenced our theology, the church will better understand its identity, ministry, mission and relation with those who are seen as outsiders."

So make plans to attend Assembly 2016 in Saskatoon from July 6 to 10 and join your brothers and sisters from across MC Canada for worship and learning, discussion and decision making, eating, conversation and laughter—all practices for cultivating an imagination to live as a faithful people of God in the 21st century.

*Karen Martens Zimmerly is executive minister of formation and pastoral leadership for Mennonite Church Canada.*

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Second, the sentence refers specifically to the way Hollywood has recently demonstrated the strength of its female protagonists by showing how they can be as violent as the violent male protagonists that have dominated Hollywood during the past century. (For much of that time, women were generally portrayed as weak and passive.) My article argued that it is an error

to view the capacity to act violently as a strength or virtue.

I certainly agree that it is not the responsibility of women to fix men's problems or to teach men about nonviolence. The reference to Rey as a female leader teaching men is related specifically to Hollywood feminism and Hollywood's contribution to perpetuating a culture of violence that views violence as a necessary

## FAMILY TIES

# Tending our mothers' gardens

MELISSA MILLER

I am writing this column on Mother's Day weekend. As I weed flowerbeds, memories of my hardworking mothers and their gardens dance in my head. Gram Miller—Anna Estelle—grew up in the mountains of West Virginia, in a large family that was intimately acquainted with poverty. Growing food was necessary for survival. I remember her planting many varieties of beans or enlisting my equally hard-working grandfather to do so. Even after their family was grown, they planted huge fields of beans, a cash crop to carry them over should lean times come.

Gram Stapleton—Mary Almira—tended a large vegetable garden, along with chickens and pigs. But her passion was flowers, adorning her simple house and yard in bursting colour from spring till fall. She also made a "mean dish of dandelion," as my aunt described it, picking the leaves before the plant flowered, and stirring it into a sweet and sour sauce of milk, flour and bacon. Both grandmothers lived "more with less" decades before the term worked its way into Mennonite cookbooks and ethics.

My mother—Sara Kathryn—also planted and harvested a large vegetable garden, although I think my father was the

enthusiast. My mother was the command centre for food production. During summer and fall harvest, hundreds of bags of corn and beans, and hundreds of jars of tomatoes and peaches were stored by her efforts and the team she directed. I was one of the labourers in the field. I never acquired a love of weeding; green tomato worms, which I thought were ugly and scary, nearly did me in. Somehow through the legacy of these mothers, though, I am on my knees pulling weeds out of my little urban flowerbed, while memories bring them close to me.

Parents leave legacies, it's true. These ones of my mothers and their gardens are fertile and satisfying to recall. Other legacies may be less life-giving—ones of wounding, neglect, mistreatment or

*These [legacies] of my mothers and their gardens are fertile and satisfying to recall.*

abuse. On Mother's Day I will lead the congregational prayer; we will remember and give thanks for our mothers, for the nurture and care they provided, for the legacies that live on through their children. We will also remember other-than-mother people who nurture, the aunts and uncles, the Sunday School teachers and pastors, the neighbours and

coaches. And we will ask for God's healing in strained and broken relationships, in recognition that not all legacies are kind or helpful.

The Apostle Paul has a word for us in II Timothy 1:6. Speaking to his spiritual son Timothy, he recalls the legacy of faith Timothy received from his mothers Lois and Eunice. Paul then urges him to fan into flame the gift of God that dwells within him. As we celebrate Mother's Day and Father's Day, as we recall the legacies of our grandparents, we are tending the teachings they passed on to us, whether that be the care of gardens or the living out of faith.

I pause over my little pile of dandelion greens, then on an impulse, scoop them up and carry them into the house, transferring them from weeds to food. The dark green leaves are bursting with nutrition and will make their way into salads and omelettes. I may not have a memory of how to make the wicked

dandelion dish of my grandmother, but I can honour the tradition of gardening, and of receiving what the earth offers, as I remember those who have gone before.

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



and potentially redemptive response to evil. Showing that violent action heroes can just as easily be women as men does nothing to challenge the dangerous—and false—assumptions of the myth of redemptive violence, and does little, in my opinion, to advance the cause of Hollywood's historically unjust portrayal of women.

VIC THIESSEN, WINNIPEG

## ✉ A 'respectful' question to LGBTQ commentators

RE: "WHEN THE church listens," April 11, page 16.

Who has watched the *Listening Church* video that is online at [listeningchurch.ca](http://listeningchurch.ca)? I know what the commentators meant when they used the "coming out"

(Continued on page 12)

## GOD, MONEY AND ME

# What are you planting this spring?

HAROLD PENNER

May. It's the time of year when many of us who have, or aspire to have, a green thumb turn our minds to gardening. Some may have already been nursing self-propagated seedlings for weeks, waiting for the right time to transplant them outside. Others make the trip to the local garden centre for flower or vegetable seedlings.

What are you growing in your garden this summer? My wife makes sure there is a selection of flowers to add colour and aroma to both the front and back yards. I like a selection of annual vegetable plants, including peas, beans, cucumbers, carrots, squash and beets, along with some tomato seedlings.

But that covers only half the plants we maintain on the fringes of our small city property. Over the years,

we have planted a number of perennials and bushes, from strawberries to raspberries, and Nankings to Saskatoons. The pleasure of harvesting fruit without having to plant new each year is always a joy.

Like our spring garden planting, we also have the opportunity to plant our charitable gardens, gardens that benefit others. Like my wife, who enjoys the beauty of flowers, some enjoy supporting the arts and cultural organizations in their community that bring the beauty of

art or music to others.

Some may contribute their charitable dollars or garden harvests to the local food bank. Others regularly donate blood, or volunteer at their local thrift store, knowing the proceeds from the store help with relief work around the world. Such donors tend to be practically minded. They know there are many little things they can do to help the immediate needs of the underprivileged in their communities or around the world.

Then there are those who support charities that seek to build a better world over the long term, like those who plant



*MFC is available as a resource centre for your charitable gardening....*

fruit trees or vineyards, or that provide children with basic needs and education resources to allow them future opportunities they would otherwise not have.

Our generosity gardens may also include mission organizations that impact individuals and communities with an holistic message of spiritual, physical and social freedom.

What type of gardener are you? Do the charities you support reflect the type of garden you plant? When meeting with individuals in my role with Mennonite

Foundation of Canada (MFC), I enjoy sharing stories about gardening. It is even more exciting to hear the passion people have for supporting a variety of local and international charities. I would love to hear your stories about the charitable seeds you are planting today and the benefits you are hoping to see develop because of your investment.

You may rely on your local garden centre to assist you with your spring gardening supplies and questions as you envision your summer gardening plans. In the same way, MFC is available as a resource centre for your charitable gardening, from annual giving to long-term charitable fund management.

*"Remember this, whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will*

*abound in every good work. As it is written: 'They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever'" (II Corinthians 9:6-9).*

*Harold Penner is a stewardship consultant at Mennonite Foundation of Canada (MFC) serving generous people in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. For more information on impulsive generosity, stewardship education, and estate and charitable gift planning, contact your nearest MFC office or visit [MennoFoundation.ca](http://MennoFoundation.ca).*

*(Continued from page 11)*

term, but I want to respectfully ask them, “Where have you been that you need to ‘come out’ again?” We have all been “out” since God let us live on this “fallen

earth.” God loves us all and he gives us the grace to love each other.

**HELEN LEPP, STEINBACH, MAN.**

## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Klein**—Arlen Daniel (b. April 23, 2016), to Bethany and Dan Klein, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

### Baptisms

**Madeline Enns, Hillary Rempel, Nadya Langelotz, Emily Enns**—Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg, May 1, 2016.

**Melissa Schulze**—The First Mennonite, Vineland, Ont., April 10, 2016.

### Marriages

**Fehr/Froese**—Erma Fehr and Jake Froese, Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man., Jan. 9, 2016.

**Holtz/Muir**—Amalia Holtz and Alec Muir (First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.), at Riversong, St. Jacobs, Ont., April 23, 2016.

### Deaths

**Kennel**—Janet, 63 (b. July 17, 1952; d. April 28, 2016), Erb

Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

**Martens**—Karen (nee Rempel), 72 (b. Aug. 4, 1943; d. March 6, 2016), Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Ont.

**Enns**—Susanna (nee Thiessen), 81 (b. Jan. 12, 1935; d. April 10, 2016), Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Horst**—Myrtle (nee Fieck), 95 (b. April 10, 1921; d. April 20, 2016), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

**Schmidt**—Agatha, 93 (b. 1922; d. April 13, 2016) in Waterville, N.B., Waterloo-Kitchener Mennonite, Ont.

**Siegers**—Lena (nee Martin), 73 (b. May 2, 1942; d. April 20, 2016), Brussels Mennonite, Ont.

**Weber**—Susannah (Sue) (nee Brubacher), 88 (b. Sept. 17, 1927; d. April 16, 2016), Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

**Wiebe**—Peter, 96 (b. July 22, 1919; d. April 20, 2016), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones announcements within four months of the event.**

**Please send Milestones announcements by e-mail to [milestones@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:milestones@canadianmennonite.org), including the congregation name and location. When sending death notices, please also include birth date and last name at birth if available.**

## A moment from yesterday



This is a photo of the privately run Mennonite school in Neu Kronsthal, Man. John Kroeker (1910-82) is front row far right, and his brother Klaas Kroeker (1907-92) stands behind him. Mennonites coming from Russia in the 1870s were promised freedom of education as well as freedom of religion, believing it was the role of the church and family to educate children, not the state. Government tolerance for these schools soon dried up. Some Mennonite parents in Manitoba and Saskatchewan who did not send their children to public English schools were fined and had property confiscated, while others served jail time. By 1918, there were 50 prosecutions in Saskatchewan. Manitoba Premier Rodmond Roblin stated in 1906 that the immigrant “who objects to perpetuating the glories of our flag and declines to have his children infused with British patriotism, is a man that is undesirable.”

*Text: Conrad Stoesz / Mennonite Heritage Centre*

*Photo: Mennonite Heritage Centre*



[archives.mhsc.ca](http://archives.mhsc.ca)

## LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

## The pursuit of truth (Pt. 5)

TROY WATSON

The first prime minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, once said, “I always tried to be correct, not politically correct.”

Sometimes the pursuit of political correctness and the pursuit of truth are at odds with one another.

The heart of the politically correct (PC) movement is good. It

is a call to extend compassion, dignity and respect to others, especially those who are marginalized, disadvantaged and discriminated against. However, there is a shadow side to the PC movement. It can reinforce marginalization by singling out a group as needing our protection or special treatment, empower others through patronization or entitlement, and threaten free speech with overzealous censorship.

An article in *The Atlantic* magazine entitled “The coddling of the American mind” reveals how many university professors, often using pseudonyms for protection, thought the political correctness of universities and colleges was out of control. They claimed an extreme PC culture was bullying anyone and everyone into submission to its ideology. One professor said, “I’m a Liberal professor, and my Liberal students terrify me.”

I heard Canadian professor Ron Srigley of the University of Prince Edward Island in a CBC *Sunday Edition* radio interview, aired on Jan. 17, suggesting our universities are no longer institutions of education, but politically correct fundraising machines that dispense diplomas.



Journalist Hannah Fearn claims in her online article for *The Independent*, “The culture of extreme political correctness at universities is dangerous to freedom of speech,” that the complicated terminology of political correctness is actually hindering honest conversation about important issues.

Human relations expert B.J. Gallagher writes in the *Huffington Post*: “Political correctness has become a bigger problem than the problem it was intended to address. . . . If we must constantly self-censor any conversation pertaining to race, gender, religion, sexual orientation or physical ability, then we are doomed to perpetuate the very barriers we say we want to overcome.” She continues, “The effect of political correctness has been to make everyone avoid these topics altogether—thereby hindering our ability to get comfortable in living and working with those who are different from us.”

Many comedians like Chris Rock and Jerry Seinfeld have spoken out against the PC movement, claiming it is producing a society of individuals who believe they have a right to not be offended while at the same time are addicted to being offended. They feel we’ve crossed the rational threshold of political correctness in society, especially in colleges and universities, and that this PC culture is killing comedy.

Some comedians are even refusing to perform at university campuses because of the over-sensitivity of the students. British comedian John Cleese is one of them. He

warns of the dangers of political correctness in a video clip that is now going viral, saying, “Psychiatrist Robert Skinner once said to me, ‘If people can’t control their own emotions, then they have to start trying to control other people’s behaviour.’” Cleese claims that this is what is happening with the PC culture today, and he believes if this fear of offending people continues, humour will be lost and we might as well be living in 1984, referring to George Orwell’s novel *1984* that describes a dystopian society oppressed and controlled through government surveillance, censorship and terror.

When a single ideology starts dictating what is allowed to be part of public discourse, and dissenting voices and unpopular perspectives are silenced or censored, the pursuit of truth is lost. It wasn’t healthy when the church had this kind of power in the past and it isn’t healthy for any ideology or group to have this kind of power now. It doesn’t matter if we are liberal or conservative, gay or straight, religious or secular, the pursuit of truth requires a willingness to engage ideas and perspectives that contradict or even offend our own ideas, values, beliefs and convictions. The pursuit of truth also requires humility and an openness to the possibility I may be wrong, even about that which I’m most committed to, passionate about and convinced of.

Whenever certain perspectives are banned or censored, whenever we’re more committed to defending or enforcing our own ideology than to learning and understanding, whenever we’re unwilling to educate ourselves by examining all the available and pertinent information on the subject at hand, even if it doesn’t support our worldview, the pursuit of truth has been forsaken. Instead of seeking truth, we are seeking only to affirm what we already believe to be true, which may be a fabrication of our own imaginations, biases, preferences and narcissism. We have become, in a word, dogmatic.

To be continued . . .

Troy Watson ([troydw@gmail.com](mailto:troydw@gmail.com)) is pastor of Avon Mennonite Church in Stratford, Ont.

## GENEALOGICAL REFLECTION

## GRanDMA provides link to the past

HANS JANZEN

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

“A person who does not know where he or she comes from has no idea where he or she is going.” Those words were spoken to me in January 1980 by my wife’s maternal grandfather, Aron Boschmann, in his sitting room in Curitiba, Brazil.

Grandmother Boschmann overheard our conversation and questioned why I would want to know this. My reply was that their story and that of most of our Mennonite ancestors was unique and would be forgotten if it was not preserved. It was at this point that Grandpa Boschmann spoke the quote that leads off this article.

His words have become a touchstone in my life, and they are certainly instructive to those who choose to ignore who their ancestors were, what they did and where they lived. When we fall into the trap of letting the past be the past, we are deprived of the lessons we can learn from our history, both good and bad. Not paying attention to the errors of the past predisposes us to make them again.

As a youth in St. Catharines, Ont., I was surrounded at church and in our very active young peoples group by those who were ethnically and culturally the same, with a shared history, language and life experience. Most of the parents and grandparents had come to Canada from Russia in the 1920s or after the Second World War. Most of us spoke German at home and our parents spoke *Plautdietsch* amongst themselves. Many of us knew that we were somehow related to each other, and this gave us a great sense of community and common purpose.

Prior to embarking on the 2009 Mennonite Heritage Cruise to Ukraine, my wife and I received our genealogical



*Hans Janzen is pictured with his great-grandfather's gravestone in the Schoeneberg, Chortitza, cemetery in October 2009.*

history from Alan Peters, of Fresno, Calif. He is the first person on the Genealogical Registry and Database of Mennonite Ancestry (GRanDMA) and the genealogical resource person on the cruise.

We were able to see how much work others had done using GRanDMA to provide names, dates, places and events that were part of our individual family histories. When we got to Ukraine, I was able to stand where my mother had stood and was allowed into my great-grandfather's house in Schoeneberg, Chortitza, where his initials and the date of construction are on the gable of the house to this day. We were able to find my great-great-grandfather's and great-great-grandmother's gravestones in the Schoeneberg cemetery, two of the very few that still remain. Both experiences were very humbling and emotional.

What still amazes me is that I felt as if I had been in Schöneberg before, so vivid

had been the pictures in my mind's eye, based on my mother's description of the village, the layout and the surroundings. Having access to first-hand information allows those who wish to trace their roots the ability to get reliable facts.

The visit to Ukraine changed my life so much that finding out more about the Mennonite time in South Russia and how our family fit into that history has become a passion.

I was humbled to find out that my fourth great-grandfather was Jacob Hoepfner, one of the two delegates who negotiated with Catherine the Great to bring the Prussian Mennonites to Russia. I would not have known this unless a large group of people interested in preserving our history had not taken the time to provide their family information to the database. This allowed the connections to be made. The oral history of my father's side of the family did not include any information beyond great-great-grandfather Janzen.

GRanDMA is not a primary source of genealogical information, because it is dependent upon the accuracy of the information provided by the contributors to the database. However, if all contributors to GRanDMA provide detailed and accurate names, dates, places and events, people consulting the database can come away fairly certain that their search is at least headed in the right direction.

As you start your research, you soon realize that many families would recycle names, often using a name two or three times, generation after generation. Village names were also repeated, so knowing dates and specific countries becomes very important.

To submit information to GRanDMA, e-mail [grandmaupdate@gmail.com](mailto:grandmaupdate@gmail.com), or call Kevin Enns-Rempel at 1-559-453-2225, or e-mail him at [kevin.enns-rempe@fresno.edu](mailto:kevin.enns-rempe@fresno.edu). For information about how I have learned to research family history, e-mail me at [hcjanzen@gmail.com](mailto:hcjanzen@gmail.com). ☺

*Hans Janzen is a retired high school technology teacher who spends his time at home in Mississauga, Ont., and his farm in West Lincoln.*

## FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH

# One way your church can stop hiding mental illness

BY APRIL YAMASAKI

**M**ental illness is not as obvious as a broken leg, but it's just as real. According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, 20 percent of Canadians will experience a mental illness in their lifetime. In one study, 84 percent of clergy say they have been approached by a suicidal person for help.

So mental illness is a reality. It touches many lives directly or indirectly, in the church and outside of it. One way that the church can respond to mental illness is to stop hiding it, and one way to stop hiding it is to recognize that the Bible includes stories of people with mental illness.

King Saul was tormented by an evil spirit (I Samuel 16:14-23). He was so distressed that he didn't know what to do with himself, and his attendants finally suggested that they find someone who could play the harp for him and maybe he would feel better.

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was suddenly taken ill. He couldn't stand to be with other people. He couldn't stand to be in his beautiful royal palace. Some time later—and just as suddenly—the king's health was restored and he became well again.

Psalms 22, which has so many parallels with Jesus' death on the cross, may also be understood as the cry of someone with severe depression: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest" (verses 1-2).

The Apostle Paul writes of "a thorn" in his flesh, which may have been a physical ailment, or perhaps depression or some other kind of mental illness. Whatever it was, he described it as "a messenger of Satan to torment me," something that he had brought before God in prayer three times, but that still plagued him (II Corinthians 12:7-8).

*Today when I talk with people who are impacted by mental health issues, when we pray together, I wish I were like Jesus with the miraculous power of healing. I long to relieve their torment and to see them restored to health.*

The man living among the tombs in Mark 5 is perhaps a clearer illustration. Today, his symptoms might possibly be diagnosed as some form of schizophrenia. Miraculously, Jesus healed the man, and when he was clothed and in his right mind he wanted to join Jesus and travel to the next town with him. But Jesus said to him: "Go home to

*your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you.' And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed" (verses 19-20).*

Today, when I talk with people who are impacted by mental health issues, when we pray together, I wish I were like Jesus with the miraculous power of healing. I long to relieve their torment and to see them restored to health. Unfortunately, miraculous healing is not one of my gifts. Maybe that's not one of your gifts either. And yet, like Jesus, we can pay attention to those who are dealing with mental illness, we can listen, we can pray, we can be part of that community of friends to surround them with healing presence.

Becoming more aware of mental illness in Scripture and in our lives today is just one way that the church can stop hiding mental illness. Sharing stories, praying together, having a Mental Health Awareness Sunday, as my church did yesterday, can also help to lessen the stigma and contribute to greater understanding. ☞

*Abridged from April Yamasaki's May 4, 2015, blog post (apriilyamasaki.com).*



MENNONERDS.COM PHOTO



*Like Jesus, we can pay attention to those who are dealing with mental illness, we can listen, we can pray, we can be part of that community of friends to surround them with healing presence, says April Yamasaki, pastor of Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, B.C.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF KATHRINA REDEKOP



*Kathrina Redekop looks after herself, her family and her many interests in Stirling, Alta. Gardening, writing and music are her favourites. She is a member of Lethbridge Mennonite Church.*

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

# Depression resurrection

KATHRINA REDEKOP

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

**T**oday begins like any other, the type that has become common for me. I cheerfully get out of bed at a decent time, feed my children a healthy breakfast, tidy up and then do a boring 20 minutes on the elliptical machine while they begin their chores. It may not sound revolutionary, but I marvel at the grace contained in these everyday happenings.

Until almost three years ago, my life did not contain any calm or cheerfulness. Most days began with dread, a deadening wait for bedtime and the numbness of sleep if the nightmares stayed away.

I have lived most of my life in a battle with depression, although I was not officially diagnosed until I was 31. My journey with depression began sometime in late childhood or early puberty.

Guilt, according to [depressionhurts.ca](http://depressionhurts.ca), is a common aspect of life with depression: "People with depression often get . . . ideas [that depression is inevitable or is a character flaw] because of the feeling of guilt caused by the illness. Depression is a real health problem for which help is available. But you must be aware of it and know how to ask for help."

I felt guilty for the way my feelings affected my family, and I unconsciously tried to atone for my glaring imperfections by pursuing perfection in my studies, my walk with Christ and my extracurricular activities.

I didn't know that what I was experiencing was an illness. I thought I was lazy, that I should try harder to overcome the negative thoughts, self-hatred, guilt,

selfishness, anger and sadness that characterized most of my waking moments. My life continued because of the love of my family, even though I couldn't love myself and struggled to truly love anyone else.

As I reached adulthood, normal developments, such as leaving home, attending college, forming new friendships, dating and marriage, were abnormally stressful. Kerby, now my husband, supported me through very black times, but I was unable to form lasting friendships with others because of the guilt I carried. I was convinced that I was a terrible person and couldn't expect others to like me. I didn't want to drag others into the doldrums of negativity I lived in.

One August morning in 2013 I realized that I needed help. I had participated in 18 months of counselling, tried a regimen of exercise and dietary supplements, prayed constantly for years, had the support of family and friends, and read many self-help books. In a moment of clarity, I knew I could not fix myself.

My marriage was slowly disintegrating, my children were constantly stressed and on edge, and I had ceased to be able to care about anything. I viewed life through a haze of complete numbness or anger.

God had not healed me through my own efforts. Relief swept over me as I decided to make a doctor's appointment for myself. Even though I was pessimistic about a pill's ability to change my life, a burden lifted as I acknowledged that my life was fully and truly in God's hands, since all my best efforts only partly fulfilled my needs.

I filled the anti-depressant prescription. Each morning for three days I took the miniscule white pill. On the third day I found myself smiling spontaneously with my children. I laughed, genuinely, at a joke. I was grateful to my husband without feeling obligated. The novelty of the everyday joy of living, of being happy, did not wear off. It still hasn't.

Every morning as I take my pill I thank God for the grace and mercy contained in a tiny batch of chemicals. I rejoice in the knowledge that I can trust God to love and provide for me. I have been raised with Christ on the third day to new life. ❧

## FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH

# 'We all need counsellors'

*Saskatchewan psychologist reflects on her experience as a mental health practitioner*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent

ROSTHERN, SASK.

**T**heresa Driediger has been a counsellor for almost 30 years. "I think it's a calling, or I wouldn't still be doing it," she says.

Driediger completed an undergraduate theology degree at Canadian Bible College in Regina, Sask., then earned a master of arts degree in marital studies and counselling at St. Paul's University in Ottawa. Her first job was at a women's shelter in La Ronge, Sask. She also worked at an outpatient addictions treatment centre and as a counsellor-trainer. Although she had more education than many of her colleagues, Driediger soon learned that, because she wasn't a psychologist, she couldn't be hired in certain areas. So she moved to Edmonton to become a registered psychologist. "I still think of myself as a counsellor," she says. "Psychologist is just a title."

For many years she worked as a mental health therapist in first nation communities in northern Alberta and Saskatchewan. Both the federal government and the first nations themselves are "very cautious about who can work with first nations," she says. "They want to know that people get them and have spent enough time to understand the cultural issues, racism, addiction, family violence, residential school issues." One of the challenges she encountered was communicating with clients whose first language is not English. "There's so much you miss if you don't have their language," she says.

Currently, Driediger has a private practice in Saskatoon and Rosthern. "I'd be happy to work in the public system if I was paid sufficiently and could manage my workload," she says. The public mental health system is severely underfunded, she adds, and it's difficult for people to access counsellors. Physicians may refer them, but it can take a long time for them to see a counsellor. When they do get in, they may



*'I often pray for my clients,' says psychologist Theresa Driediger, who offers counselling services in Rosthern and Saskatoon, Sask.*

be given only six or eight sessions—not enough to establish a trusting relationship.

Many of Driediger's clients have suffered trauma of some kind or other. Whether it's physical trauma resulting from surgery or a car accident, or developmental trauma stemming from abuse or neglect, such experiences affect the individual's central nervous system. Driediger likens the nervous system to a coffee cup. With each traumatic experience the cup becomes fuller. While one individual may be able to discharge the trauma and carry on with life, another may just keep accumulating trauma. "When I'm working with people who have been severely traumatized, I know their cups are very full," she says. "It's easiest to work with car accidents or dental surgeries, things that they've survived. If I can help them discharge some of the trauma from these things, that gives them room in their cup." Once they have room, they can begin to tackle the more difficult

relational trauma.

Driediger sees the counsellor-client relationship as an attachment. For many clients, relational trauma has damaged their ability to trust others. Once they feel safe in her presence, a bond forms, and that bond becomes a model from which they can begin to develop other healthy attachments. "Once the attachment is there, it's easier to try something new when someone is supporting you," she says. "People are willing to try risky things because I've suggested it."

Driediger laments the stigma surrounding mental illness. "We all need counsellors," she says. This is especially true for emergency personnel: police officers, ambulance attendants, emergency room nurses. "If you witness trauma, you take it in. No one's tough enough to not take it in," she says. "When it starts to be in their dreams, keeps them from sleeping, they should get help and then they could probably continue."

While she may not advertise herself as a Christian counsellor, Driediger feels hers is a faith-based practice. "I often pray for my clients, particularly when I'm up against the wall and don't know how to help them," she says. "Whether they're praying to a god or not, I am, because I need wisdom."

Her work with first nation clients taught her that talking about faith and spirituality is an important aspect of healing. "They always talk about spiritual things," she says. Now, with many years of experience, Driediger doesn't shy away from talking about spiritual matters with any of her clients. "I will ask them where they find their hope, what are their spiritual beliefs. I'm just very open about that," she says.

Driediger would like people to be more open to talking about mental illness, "particularly because I think suicide haunts us," she says. "We all need to know more and be more willing to talk about the hidden things in our minds." The church, she adds, "has not been great at dealing with depression." She would like to see churches offer workshops and basic education on mental health. "People shouldn't have to be so alone in their mental illness," she says. ❧

# Leaders being equipped to build up the church

*Niverville youth ministry team speaks out on fighting mental illness on the front line*

BY BETH DOWNEY SAWATZKY

Manitoba Correspondent

Statistically, most mental illnesses show their first warning signs between the ages of 15 and 20—roughly the same age group encompassed by most church senior-youth programs. For this reason, those church members serving in youth ministry are both profoundly affected and on the vanguard of healing.

Niverville Community Fellowship, a Mennonite Church Manitoba congregation in the province's rural southeast, has been making concerted efforts over the last five years or more to ensure that the training they provide for their youth leaders reflects this reality. It's working.

Ashlyn Neufeld pastored Niverville's youth group from 2012-14. During her tenure, she says she saw how pervasively mental health struggles affected her community's youth, including depression, anxiety and acts of self-harm—like cutting. "It seemed almost like most students dealt with it in some way, at least for a while," she says.

When she arrived, the church was already working to build a positive culture concerning mental health.

"We had a local professional speak in our church," she says. "Our congregational care pastor did seminars for people who wanted to learn more or seek help. A lot of work was being done to start conversations. In the youth group, specifically, we were talking about suicide, depression, self harm, things like that, probably once or twice a year already. I was required to take Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training [ASIST] before starting my position actually. The church really felt that was important."

Neufeld's successor, Matt Antonio, adds that the church's current lead pastor, Chris Marchand, has been a trendsetter in



Matt Antonio

mental health awareness matters. Breaking down taboos and cultivating understanding, Marchand has talked openly in church about what mentally ill people are up against, and about obstacles helpers can face, like secondary trauma and compas-

*For both Antonio and Neufeld, as for many clergy, offering spiritual support in these situations is a default.*

sion fatigue.

Neufeld and Antonio laud the training they received coming into their positions. They agree that while the training deals with "basic stuff," like recognizing different warning signs, or starting a conversation when concerns arise, it is critical.

"It's hard to ask somebody, clearly, 'Are you considering suicide?'" Antonio says. "But the risk you run in not asking the question is far greater. If it's taboo for you, if you're not able to say the words, that

could result in somebody taking their life. It's important for youth leaders to invest in training and it's important for us to equip the youth to better support their friends and schoolmates."

Currently, he notes that training opportunities like ASIST or Mental Health First Aid courses are not subsidized or required for volunteer youth leaders at Niverville. However, he says that, "in light of my own experience and how much I've benefitted from my training, having more people resourced, including the youth mentors, will be essential in moving forward."

"A general role all leaders share is being a listening ear," says Neufeld. "Just genuinely caring, creating an atmosphere of acceptance, making it obvious that youth [group] is a supportive place where these things can be brought out and worked through, that's what's important. Leaders don't have to be skilled counsellors, just good listeners with some good judgment: Know your limitations, how to play as a team member, and when to reach for outside help."

Antonio echoes her ideas, emphasizing that leaders should always keep a working knowledge of local resources.

For both Antonio and Neufeld, as for many clergy, offering spiritual support in these situations is a default.

It's instinctive, Neufeld says, if not always easy. "Often you pray with somebody who's in that dark place and it seems to fall flat," she says. "There's no rush of relief or anything. You can walk away wondering, did that do anything? It can be discouraging work, and sometimes you don't know what to pray. But I wouldn't have been able to deal with those issues if I didn't have faith, have prayer. It can be so overwhelming. Every single time I talked with somebody about this, I would be constantly praying inside that the Holy Spirit would lead the conversation, that everything I did or said would be received as it should, that I would have [God's] ears and eyes. I couldn't have done it without that."

Where the church really needs to keep working, Antonio says, is in the team-spirit element, learning how to help others bring all the pieces of the puzzle together—spiritual, mental, physical and emotional needs—in order to achieve healing and genuine well-being. ❧

## FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH

# ‘There is love in this room’

*Mannheim Mennonite Church hosts mental health peer group*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent

MANNHEIM, ONT.

“Living Room Ministries” is a name coined by John E. Toews and Eleanor Loewen in the 1990s. In their book *No Longer Alone: Mental Health and the Church* (MennoMedia, 1995), they explore “the inter-relatedness of social, emotional, physical and spiritual selves; emotions that hurt or heal; depression; addictions; schizophrenia; grief; and suicide.” Their premise is that “just as we walk with persons who are physically ill, so we must learn to walk with those suffering mental illness.”

A group formed in the Lower Mainland of B.C., which has since become part of Sanctuary Mental Health Services in Vancouver, followed by groups at Rouge Valley Mennonite Church in Markham, and Vineland Mennonite Church, both in Ontario.

Gord Alton, pastor of Mannheim Mennonite Church, introduced the idea to the congregation in a series of sermons and faith formation classes in the fall of 2014. Wanda Wagler-Martin, executive director of Shalom Counselling in Waterloo, and others were invited to come and talk about mental health issues.

In November 2014, a group formed and has met 18 times since, including a few times around a campfire on the church property in rural Wilmot Township. This group is led by Alton, a trained spiritual director and certified pastoral counsellor specialist with the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care (formerly Canadian Association for Pastoral Education); and Alexa Winchell, a member of the congregation with training in psychotherapy and social work, and a history in pastoral work and hospital chaplaincy. But they are keen to emphasize that the group is peer driven and not primarily a therapy group led by them.

In a cosy corner of the church’s foyer, a group of couches with living room style lights invites the group to join in a circle.

The first hour includes a focus on a biblical passage and thinking about it from a psychological perspective, focussing on grief, depression, personality disorders or other topics. This is the work of Alton and Winchell. Following a short break for coffee and snack, the group members tell their stories.

Meeting monthly, the group has about 10 regulars. It has a “self-sustaining culture,” says Alton, and has become less structured as time has moved on.

Four simple prayers make up part of their time. Each prayer helps members externalize emotions, including anger at life and what it has dealt them. Topics have included “creating a circle of trust,” “living beyond (therapeutic) labels,” “being a blessing,” “grieving losses,” and “accepting our human condition.” A set of guidelines for interactions guides all participants in making the circle a welcoming place for all.

One member shared a grief about her mental health service dog getting old and not being able to afford the \$4,000 to replace it. The group quickly

organized a dinner to try to raise some funds. Members—an artist, a poet, musicians, storyteller—each contributed to the event, which included a silent auction. When they were done, an extra thousand dollars was donated to Service Dogs Canada.

Members of the group are all either from the congregation or have a relationship with someone in the congregation. The hope originally had been to include others from local Wilmot Township congregations, and while they are still welcome, this has not happened. Stories have been shared in worship by members, and Winchell has preached.

The congregation has embraced the group, freeing Alton to pursue this ministry, and making room for them. The couches often get used by members on Sunday mornings both before the service and during coffee hour.

Winchell calls the “Living Room” a “laboratory for miracles,” as people learn to listen, become quiet inside and less disruptive and oppressive. She notes that “there is love in this room.”

A participant said that “this group has saved me from complete self-destruction. There is very deep grace in this group.”

Members report fewer hospitalizations for incidents and claim that “this group has become my family.”

There is no cost to participants. ❧



*Gord Alton and Alexa Winchell in Mannheim Mennonite Church’s ‘Living Room.’*

## FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH

# Mental health awareness incorporates art and poetry

BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Poetry and visual art proved to be a powerful combination as members of Emmanuel Mennonite Church observed Mental Health Sunday this year on May 1.

A year ago, Angelika Dawson, a member of Emmanuel and communications manager for Communitas Supportive Care Society, helped develop a worship resource for Communitas, a faith-based organization that ministers to British Columbians living with disabilities, both physical and mental, called “God of all comfort: Mental health resources for church worship.”

Dawson wanted to incorporate art into her congregation’s Mental Health Sunday worship experience, speculating that an art display could help convey a message about mental health. When it comes to the fine arts, churches have traditionally concentrated on music, she realized.

Dawson contacted four writers in the church to compose a poem on an aspect of mental health, then matched an artist or photographer to each poet to create an original work on the poet’s theme. Each of the poets and artists has either experienced a mental health challenge or is close to someone who has.

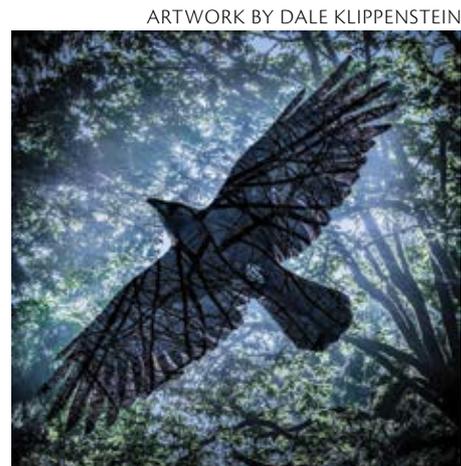
“I love it when we give artists the opportunity to see into our worship,” Dawson said. Unlike visual art, which is experienced by looking at it, she noted that “poetry is not always accessible [to everyone]; sometimes you just have to hear it read out loud.”

The adult Sunday school class on May 1 gave the authors the opportunity to read their poems and the artists to explain how they had depicted those words visually. It proved to be an emotional experience. Many in the class were moved to tears, commenting later how powerful it had been to experience both poetry and art in such a way.

In the worship service that followed, Dawson shared her own journey with

mental health. She was encouraged that later two people contacted her to say that, because of her openness in sharing, they had the courage to seek professional help for their own mental health needs. ❧

*The Communitas materials for worship are available online at [communitascare.com/stories/](http://communitascare.com/stories/).*



ARTWORK BY DALE KLIPPENSTEIN

*This artwork illustrated the poem ‘You Crow’ at Emmanuel Mennonite Church’s Mental Health Sunday.*

## Helping to prevent suicide

*Former mental health sufferer tells his story to help others*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent  
LAIRD, SASK.

It’s painful for Ken Reddig to tell his story, but he says, “If I can help prevent one loss, then it’s worth it.” Reddig spoke to the adult Sunday school class at Tiefengrund Mennonite Church, north of Laird, Sask., with guests from Laird and Eigenheim Mennonite churches also participating in the April 24 session.

At age 12, Reddig was sexually abused by an adult in his congregation, which led to a lifetime of shame, anger, depression and several suicide attempts. At Eden Mental Health Centre in Winkler, Man., Reddig began the long journey to recovery. The turning point came when he began to take an interest in getting well. “I realized that if anything happened, it had to be because of me,” he says. “I had to make it happen.”

Today, Reddig, who lives in Pinawa, Man., serves on the board of the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention. He says mental health disorders, substance abuse and prolonged stress can all play a part in a person’s decision to commit suicide. While many suicides happen impulsively in moments of crisis, Reddig says people who are suicidal often reach out for help.



*Ken Reddig shares his story of mental illness with the adult Sunday school class at Tiefengrund Mennonite Church, north of Laird, Sask.*

“Be there for someone who is struggling,” he urges. “Support them, but don’t judge. Ask if they have a [suicide] plan. If they have a plan, they are high risk. Get help!” He encourages would-be caregivers to become familiar with the names and contact information of counsellors, mental health workers and physicians, and to have this information at the ready. He would also like to see pastors seek training in suicide prevention. “One in four people will have a mental health issue in their lifetime,” he says. ❧

*Read more about Reddig’s journey at [bit.ly/bird-therapy](http://bit.ly/bird-therapy), and [bit.ly/reddig-survivor](http://bit.ly/reddig-survivor).*



## GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

## /// Briefly noted

Youth Assembly 2016  
keynote speakers profiled

• **REECE FRIESEN** is married and the father of five daughters aged 6 weeks to 12 years. He's also a pastor at Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., and the creator of *Pax Avalon*, a comic book featuring a costumed super-heroine. He is bringing his passion for an Anabaptist perspective with a focus on community to Youth Assembly 2016 as a keynote speaker, exploring the "God~Faith~People" theme, and the idea of "covenant"—also known as the #thecovenantcrew. Although Friesen works primarily with children and youth, tearing down walls of ageism is something he's worked hard at in his role at



**Reece  
Friesen**

Eben-Ezer. "The best way for young people to flourish is by spending time with people of other generations who can mentor them in faithful living." Growing up as a visual artist, Friesen had trouble finding ways to express his gift in the church. His passion for the Anabaptist faith community helped shape *Pax Avalon's* heroine, who brings hope and healing into a world of violence. Friesen hopes that youth will leave God~Faith~People with the understanding that they can learn how to be faithful by looking to the generations before them.

• **CHRIS LENSHTYN** describes himself as a "husband, father of two, Anabaptist, activist and writer." He's also an associate pastor at Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., and the other keynote speaker for Youth Assembly 2016. Lenshtyn is looking forward



**Chris  
Lenshtyn**

to creating a wide space for dialogue with participants. "Dialogue creates investment and wonderment, and the ability to dig deeply into matters of faith and life," he says. "Youth are perceptive, really perceptive." He notes that the issues on the table—the Future Directions Task Force report and the Being a Faithful Church conversation—profoundly affect youth and the future of the church. Special curricula have been developed to help youth consider each issue prior to the assembly, so that they can take part in discussions with adult delegates. "It's important that they are there to talk about the best and worst of covenant and community," Lenshtyn says. "Doing community and life together amidst the warts and our frailties and vulnerabilities is worth it because of Jesus." —Mennonite Church Canada



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# Finding God in my neighbourhood

*Mennonite Church Eastern Canada seeks the future*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent

LEAMINGTON, ONT.

Stuart Murray, author of *The Naked Anabaptist*, encouraged Mennonite Church Eastern Canada delegates to become mobile temples, moving out of their buildings and into the neighbourhood to speak out the good news of God's redeeming presence. At the annual church gathering held in Leamington on April 28 and 29, he encouraged the church to work with non-churched people, meeting the needs of the community, rather than building churches. Murray and Alex Elish told stories about God at work in their neighbourhoods in Britain.

In his second presentation, Murray explained why he has hope for the future of God's work in the world. There is a moral vacuum at the heart of western culture, he said, so the Christian story of God at work in the world can help people make sense of the big story of human existence. He called on Christians to be a hopeful minority.

Stories from MC Eastern Canada's church planters accentuated the missional theme on the afternoon of April 30.



*Brian Quan, left, pastor of Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church and MC Eastern Canada's assistant moderator, gives a plant to Jonathan Abraham, centre, pastor of Shalom Worship and Healing Centre, to welcome it as an emerging congregation. Missions minister Brian Bauman, right, looks on.*

Jordan Thoms spoke of working in an under-resourced neighbourhood in Toronto, where he shepherds a group of about 20 who meet Thursday evenings to worship and study Scripture together. Thoms is one of several young (twenty-something) leaders Colin McCartney shepherds, mentors and trains in Toronto.

McCartney's wife Judith is working on a church plant among "soccer moms." After a year, she has many meaningful relationships. Just as Murray taught, she has a long-term commitment to these people and their needs. (Urban Expression in Britain tells their church planters to not even think about beginning worship for at least a year.)

Shalom Worship and Healing Centre, an Eritrean congregation meeting at First Mennonite Church, an intra-cultural Spanish and English congregation in Kitchener, Ont., was accepted as an emerging congregation by the area church.

Michael Monnette and Lynd Renaud, a married couple from near Montréal, were given time to share their vision of a church in the highly secularized environment there. Roi des Rois (King of Kings) meets in a neighbourhood which was "ground zero" in a war between the Hells Angels and Rock Machine motorcycle gangs in the 1990s. One of the former bikers now plays drums in the congregation's worship services.

ReLearning Community, a program to equip lay and pastoral leaders to reach out into their communities based on local need and congregational passion, and the Anabaptist Learning Workshop, a new effort to train the leaders in both new and older congregations, were highlighted as ways congregations can equip themselves for missional work.

In other business, a balanced budget

was achieved through congregational giving and the careful use of reserves. The 2016-17 spending plan was approved. The Legacy Initiatives Fund, based in large part on the bequest of Harold and Enid Schmidt of Baden, Ont., continues to fund new mission initiatives.

The situation of the building and property at 74 Fir Valley Court in Toronto, the site of the now-closed Warden Woods Mennonite Church, has not been resolved through mediation and will probably go to court for clarification on its ownership. The Warden Woods Community Centre claims ownership, but MC Eastern Canada's legal counsel has said the area church cannot give the building to the Centre since the purpose of the building is no longer a church.

Due to some sexual boundary crossings by MCEC pastors, Carol Penner, is preparing a resource with stories and questions for discussion, to equip leaders and members to name and address boundary care in congregations.

## **Amended Future Directions motion accepted**

The Future Directions Task Force's final report took a major time slot on Saturday. In the morning, a report on regional meetings noted that the vote would not be on the "back story," with its specific ideas for future structure, but only the four-page summary. David Martin, executive minister, noted that consultations have shown that congregations were passionate about MC Canada and missions.

Among those who responded was Dave Tiessen, pastor of Bethel Mennonite Church near Elora, Ont., who challenged the process to look at spiritual and theological perspectives, not only structural and financial ones.

Sylvia Hook of Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont., wondered if connections between the five area churches would weaken if there wasn't a delegate body at the national level.

Several speakers noted that this exercise was probably more about the MC Canada shortfall in funding than anything else.

When the motion to accept the report was on the floor in the afternoon, many questions were aired, including whether there was time for feedback after the MC



*Fred Driedger, left, Janet Woelk and Debbie Janzen welcome MC Eastern Canada delegates to Leamington, Ont., at the beginning of the birding season at the nearby Point Pelee National Park.*

Canada delegate sessions in Saskatoon in July. Other questions dealt with the implications on national schools, how a national identity could be preserved and how local congregations could support national initiatives without direct connections to the national body. It quickly became clear that there was no strong consensus.

Cyrille Fapoussi of Avon Mennonite Church, Stratford, Ont., said that unity requires a spiritual foundation and suggested the process should be focussed on Philippians 1:27: *“Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel”* (NRSV).

Alicia Good of North Leamington Mennonite Church, Leamington, wondered whether theologians had been engaged in the process.

Questions about international mission continued to be raised. Tom Yoder Neufeld of First Mennonite, Kitchener, suggested an amendment, which quickly drew David Martin and Willard Metzger, MC Canada executive director, into a side conversation. Moderator Paul Wideman spoke passionately about the need for MC Eastern Canada to maintain a trusting relationship with western area churches, and the need for trust within this area church.

After a break, a revised motion that explicitly stated that MC Eastern Canada delegates would be kept informed of the process over the next two years, and that they would have the chance to vote on a more fully developed proposal, was overwhelmingly accepted. ❧

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# Wisdom in legacy

Women explore how generations pass on faith

STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Recalling the legacies passed down through generations, women gathered on April 30 for the 77th annual Mennonite Church B.C. women's Inspirational Day at Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church.

With II Timothy 1:3-7 as her text, speaker Ingrid Schultz used the examples of Timothy's grandmother Lois and mother Eunice, who both passed their faith on to him. Schultz is currently chaplain at Menno Place in Abbotsford and former pastor of First United Mennonite Church, Vancouver.

Schultz talked of "Grandmothers, mothers and mentors: Reclaiming our legacy" in the morning. Mothers and grandmothers provide some of the most compelling models of what it means to be a woman of faith, said Schultz. She drew on her own family history, telling of her grandmother who had to support four children when her husband was taken away by the Soviet secret police; and of her mother who worked from childhood on to support the family. "My mother the hard worker, the strong woman . . . knew that being loved was a gift, a grace of God," recalled Schultz.

In her work as chaplain at a campus of care for elders, Schultz said she often asks residents, "What do you want to be remembered for 20 years from now?" A common answer is wanting to leave a legacy to future generations.

Gathered around tables, participants then had a chance to discuss questions about the legacy left by their own family members. What was most appreciated? What needed to be let go?

The afternoon session was on "Daughters, disciples and dreamers: Sharing our legacy of faith." Schultz related how, in her work at Menno Place, she finds that many of the elderly tell the same stories over and over again, often in the area of their greatness. "These stories give joy to these residents each time they tell them, as they are reminded of the legacy they have

to share. When they forget their stories, we can remind them of their legacy."

Questions discussed around the tables in the afternoon included: "Who are the women who have inspired you to dream?" and "How do you want to pass on a legacy of generosity and faith?"

The day's offering netted just over \$4,400, with half going to Camp Squeah. The other half was divided between



Surrounded by personal mementoes representing women of several generations, Ingrid Schultz speaks on the legacy of faith at the MC B.C. women's Inspirational Day on April 30.

Mennonite Women Canada's international ministries and Youth Unlimited, a local ministry among youth from the Punjabi community. %

## /// Staff changes

### Presidential transitions at EMU, Conrad Grebel

• **SUSAN SCHULTZ HUXMAN**, currently serving as president of Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., has been appointed as the ninth president of Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Harrisonburg, Va., effective Jan. 1, 2017. Her selection follows a 10-month process conducted by a Presidential Search Committee of representatives from the EMU board, faculty, staff, students and alumni, the Mennonite Education Association Board and Mennonite Church U.S.A. "We are delighted that Dr. Huxman has accepted this call," said Evon L. Bergey, chair of the Presidential Search Committee and an EMU board member. "She was a top choice for many reasons. Her deeply rooted Anabaptist faith, commitment to Mennonite higher education, innovative spirit, administrative experience and scholarly abilities will be great gifts to our students and the campus community." Huxman will succeed Loren E. Swartzendruber, who has served as university president since 2003. His term ends on June 30, when Lee Snyder, former academic dean and professor at EMU, as well as former president of Bluffton (Ohio) University, will serve six months as interim president. Huxman earned her master's and doctoral degrees in communication studies from the University of Kansas. Huxman is the first woman to be appointed president at EMU.

• **JIM PANKRATZ**, a former Grebel dean, has accepted the invitation to serve as interim president, following Huxman's departure. The transition will commence this fall around the time of the college's annual general meeting on Oct. 1. Pankratz served as the college's dean from 2006 until his retirement in 2014. While at Grebel, Pankratz directed the theological studies program and taught graduate courses on the relationship of Christianity to other faiths. His present research focusses on the interaction of Mennonite missionaries with the religions and cultures of India during the 20th century. A search committee will be struck to find a new president at the June board meeting.

—EMU/Conrad Grebel



Susan  
Schultz  
Huxman



Jim  
Pankratz

# New church emphasizes word and action

*Église mennonite Ichtus chooses to associate with MC Eastern Canada but not join the area church as an emerging congregation at this point*

BY DAVE ROGALSKY  
Eastern Canada Correspondent

Pastor Mario Marchand says that Québec's Église mennonite Ichtus strives toward both word and action in its ministry, comparing them to the two wheels necessary to make a bicycle rideable. (*Ichtus* is the French version of the Greek word/acronym for "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Saviour.")

The congregation, located in Loretteville, north of Québec City, has been meeting for about three years, but has only recently chosen to associate with Mennonite Church Eastern Canada. The congregation began meeting in the basement of St-Ambroise de Loretteville Roman Catholic Church last year, at the offer of the priest.

It has since begun to have activities with that Catholic church, including a

Halloween costume drop-in, at which Ichtus members handed out 200 copies of the Gospel of John and information on a Christian perspective of climate change. More than 10,000 people participated in the drop-in event.

The 25 people who meet each Sunday include Marchand and his wife, Line Lemieux, who is the co-church planter, their sons and a variety of people from the greater Québec City area. Marchand says that congregational worship begins with praise songs, continues with an interactive sermon, and ends with sharing and prayer.

With the local Christian scene divided between mostly evangelical/fundamentalist and Roman Catholic churches, Marchand sees a place for Mennonite



*Joel Marchand and Mario Marchand during Joel's baptism in the fall of 2014.*

congregations that are ready to acknowledge Jesus' life and sacrifice, as well as working for reconciliation and the healing of relationships.

One of the practical things the congregation supports is Défi Jeunesse Québec (the Québec Teen Challenge ministry). Located southwest of Québec City, the organization runs one of the largest vegetable farms in the province and provides fresh produce to food banks in Montréal, Québec City and Sherbrooke. Ichtus would like to make it known that this residential program for people learning to be free of alcohol and drugs needs a four-wheel-drive 55-horsepower tractor, a crop sprayer with a 20-metre range, and an outdoor wood furnace. Anyone with these items can contact Marchand at [lirio@videotron.ca](mailto:lirio@videotron.ca).

He and Lemieux attended a Baptist congregation for about four years when they first moved to the Québec City area. Through his contacts, including a lawyer friend who is Pentecostal, he is working to influence the justice system and schools with restorative justice. He has studied with Howard Zehr at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., and did his doctorate in practical theology on restorative justice.

The congregation is not yet ready to join MC Eastern Canada as an emerging congregation, but Marchand has applied to be licensed toward ordination in the area church this summer. ❧

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ÉGLISE MENNONITE ICHTUS



*Prayer time at Église mennonite Ichtus during its Mennonite World Conference Day.*

## GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

# Together in lament, prayer and hope

*Home Street Mennonite mourns the suicide deaths of six members of Pimicikamak Cree Nation since December 2015*

BY DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada

WINNIPEG

Colourful paper cranes folded neatly cover words of prayer. Bowls of floating candles melting together as one. A smudging ceremony rich with prayer that took five times as long as organizers thought it would because so many people took part.

These elements brought symbolic meaning to a March 20 service of lament and prayer at Home Street Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. The service was held to show solidarity with Pimicikamak Cree Nation, Cross Lake, Man., and mourn the suicide

deaths of six members of that first nation community since Dec. 12, 2015.

Moses Falco, pastor of Sterling Mennonite Fellowship and a former Mennonite Church Canada staff member; Dorothy Fontaine, MC Manitoba director of mission; and Irma Fast Dueck, associate professor of practical theology at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), led the group organizing the service. More than 80 people attended, representing a diverse range of backgrounds

PHOTO BY TERRY ZIMMERLY



*Throughout a service of prayer and lament for Pimicikamak Cree Nation, Cross Lake, Man., at Home Street Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, people wrote prayers on slips of origami paper and folded them into paper cranes. The cranes will be delivered to Pimicikamak as a reminder of the prayers surrounding them in the wake of the suicide deaths of six members of that first nation community since Dec. 12, 2015.*

that included members of the city's indigenous community.

"There is a long and complex history behind these tragedies," Fontaine wrote in an invitation to attend the service, "but for now we hope to gather in solidarity and prayer for our sisters and brothers whose sorrows are profound and whose God-beloved lives are inextricably woven with our own."

Falco, who has had a relationship with the Cross Lake community for a number of years, says he knew many people who wanted to show support for Pimicikamak but weren't able to visit the community, which is located several hours away from Winnipeg. "When the church in Cross Lake told me that they needed prayer, the service seemed an appropriate response," he said.

To be faithful to the indigenous community, Falco said it was important to include smudging and drumming, practices that don't always fit well in churches. Yet people readily participated. Elder Grandma (Gerry) Shingoose explained how to smudge by sweeping sweet-grass smoke over one's face, describing it as a cleansing act. Falco said her explanation reminded him of Psalm 19:14: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you," and "Psalm 51:10: 'Create in me a clean heart, O God.'"

Fast Dueck brought floating candles and two large bowls of water to the service. She said that people lit candles as they entered the sanctuary, and that by the end of the service "they melted together as one in floating bowls of fire." She found comfort in Shingoose's perspective of suicide: "Aboriginal teaching tells us that those who commit suicide are taken care of by their ancestors, who meet them when they die."

Just before the service, Samantha Klassen, a CMU student, showed up with origami paper and pencil crayons to create paper crane prayers in an unexpected and spontaneous gesture of compassion. Klassen, who was engaged in an ongoing project exploring origami as a form of prayer, viewed this as a natural extension of her project. "It was wonderful to see how people from all walks of life participated," she wrote.

The paper cranes will be delivered to Pimicikamak as a reminder of the prayers surrounding them. ❧

# Linking global hunger and small-scale farmers

Canadian Foodgrains Bank

**K**arla Fehr, a member of Blumenort Mennonite Church in Gretna, Man., was part of a food study tour group organized by the Canadian Foodgrains Bank that travelled to Nicaragua for about two weeks earlier this year to learn about the link between global hunger and small-scale farmers.

Participants saw how the Foodgrains Bank is responding, what local and national organizations are doing, and learned about global hunger firsthand from the people whose lives it affects.

“It was a wonderful experience,” says Fehr. “I wanted to go on this trip because my husband and I have been involved in a local growing project that raises money for the Foodgrains Bank. I was able to see how that money is used in projects in the developing world, how it makes a difference in the lives of people. I also serve on the board of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, but I don’t have any experience in the developing world. I learned firsthand how conservation agriculture and other projects combat global hunger.”

Nicaragua, a small country in Central America, is recovering from years of civil unrest. It is the second-poorest country in Central and Latin America, and almost half of the population lives on less than a dollar a day, according to the World Food Programme. Many children suffer from chronic malnutrition.

Food study tours focus on three main goals, says James Kornelsen, tour leader and public engagement coordinator for the Foodgrains Bank. “There’s a focus on building a sense of global community, learning about hunger, and seeing how Foodgrains Bank member agencies are responding to the needs of hungry people around the world. . . . It’s a powerful way of reminding Canadians about the reality of life for small-scale farmers, and the

PHOTO COURTESY OF KARLA FEHR



*Karla Fehr, a member of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank's study tour group to Nicaragua, centre, thanks a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) partner organization that hosted the group in the community of Nancitillo. Also pictured is Andrew Claassen, far right, MCC's Connecting People worker in Nicaragua .*

role that Canada plays in promoting food security in other parts of the world where hunger is more prevalent.”

Canadian church member agencies

that run the projects the group visited are Mennonite Central Committee, Presbyterian World Service and Development, and World Renew. ☛

MCC MANITOBA PHOTO



**Grant, pictured, and Colleen Dyck of Artel Farms, Niverville Man., are once again offering up 121 hectares of farmland to raise funds for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), which has arranged to funnel all of this year's proceeds from the crops grown on this land into relief for Syrian refugees through the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. All donations to Syrian relief made through the Foodgrains Bank this year are eligible for a 4:1 matching grant from the Government of Canada. Artel Farms and MCC, together with their sponsors, hope to raise as much as \$750,000 for refugee relief.**



*Patrick Drapeau took this photo from his cell phone as he and his wife Rachel fled the wildfires of Fort McMurray, Alta.*

## Fleeing the Fort McMurray fire

BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD  
Alberta Correspondent

“I have a new appreciation for the phrase, ‘spreads like wildfire,’” says Patrick Drapeau. He and his wife Rachel live in Fort McMurray, the Alberta community that faced raging wildfires for more than a week in early May.

Despite residents having packed ahead of time, the evacuation order caught everyone off guard. The fire began on May 2. While many residents had prepared for possible evacuation, everything seemed to be under control.

May 3 began as a beautiful day; the fire was moving away from the city and people were advised to go to work.

“I wasn’t worried at all,” Patrick says.

Leaving their packed vehicles in the driveway of their Beacon Hill home, the couple took the usual busses to their work sites. Rachel is a materials engineer with Syncrude, 45 minutes north of the city, and Patrick is a quality assurance inspector with Canada Natural Resource Limited (CNRL), 90 minutes away.

At 2 p.m., they heard news of the mandatory evacuation order, but there were no busses to take people back to the city. Both managed to catch rides to the north end of

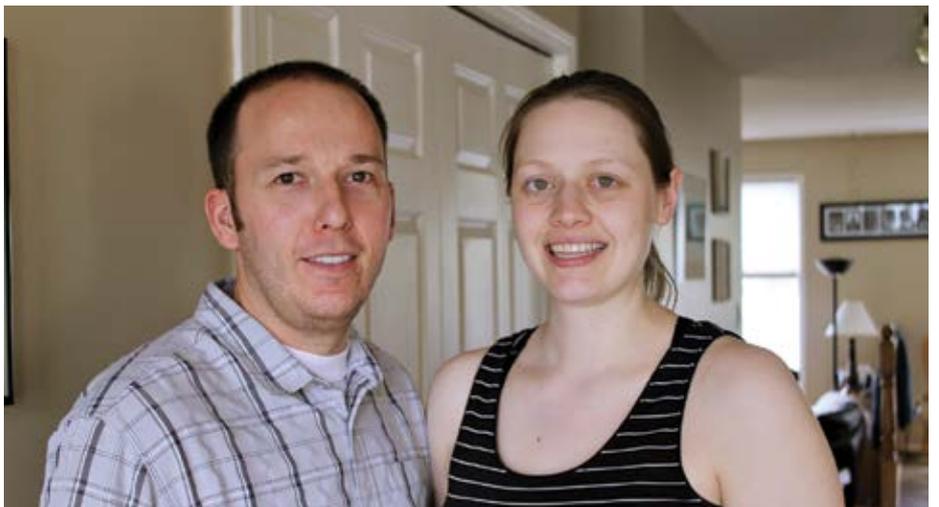
town with fellow workers, but flames were already jumping the river and they were unable to cross to the south to retrieve their vehicles from home. Cell phone service was spotty, but they managed to find

each other and get a ride back to Patrick’s workplace. The 80-kilometre ride took four hours.

While leaving the city, they could see flames in the rearview mirror. Cars were stuck in ditches, some vehicles had run out of gas and were abandoned, and people were fleeing on motorbikes and all-terrain vehicles.

“I hope it’s the last time I ever see traffic going north on both sides of the road,”

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PATRICK AND RACHEL DRAPEAU



*Patrick and Rachel Drapeau were evacuated from Fort McMurray, Alta., along with 80,000 other residents, arriving in Edmonton with only the clothes they were wearing, Rachel’s work ID, Patrick’s driver’s licence and one credit card. ‘I don’t even have a hairbrush!’ Rachel says. They are pictured wearing their new clothes from Costco.*

Patrick says.

A neighbour of the Drapeaus had been changing the oil in his truck that fateful morning. While still lying on his back, he saw flames. He jumped into his vehicle, but the road out was already impassable, so he drove over a hill and down a ditch. He got through, but stopped and rescued two other people whose car was stuck in the ditch. They didn't even have time to grab their bags because the grass was on fire.

The Drapeaus have high praise for the way CNRL responded, saying that the company was helping everyone who showed up at the camp, offering places to stay or spaces on planes heading to Edmonton. Temporary kennels were even set up for pets.

Patrick and Rachel arrived in Edmonton early in the morning of May 4 with only the clothes on their backs, Rachel's work ID, Patrick's driver's licence and one credit card. Along with their neighbours, they are staying with Rachel's parents, who are members of Edmonton's First Mennonite Church, as is Rachel.

The unfolding tragedy is a reminder of the fragility of life and the illusion of independence. Rachel, who is expecting their first child in July, talks of the strange and sudden feeling of dependence on others. "It's when you have to phone the doctor and say, 'Hi, my name is Rachel and I have nothing,'" she says. "Asking for help is hard. Usually we are independent and can care for ourselves. . . . I have prepared everything [for the child]. I'm ready . . . and now I'm not."

The Drapeaus, along with more than 80,000 other evacuees from the city and surrounding areas, now have to wait and cope with the uncertainty of what will happen next, whether there will be jobs, and where they will live while everything is sorted out.

The couple learned that their house is still standing, although there is no way to tell at this point if it is habitable. Their friend's home was destroyed.

It may be months before the hardest hit areas are safe. It is reported that 2,400 structures were lost in Fort McMurray; however, 90 percent of the city, including the hospital, is still standing.

Fire conditions across Alberta remain

extreme. Drought and high temperatures, combined with wind, have made battling fires like the one in Fort McMurray next to impossible. As of May 10, the fire covered 229,000 hectares of land, although cooler temperatures and some rain have helped to slow the fire's spread.

Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) has not yet released details of how the organization will become involved. Ross Penner, director of Canadian operations, says, "We are monitoring the situation closely and

anticipating engaging in the recovery, as soon as it is safe and feasible to do so. While there may soon be a chance to be involved in clean-up, the process of being ready to repair or rebuild takes months."

At that point there will be a need for volunteers to help.

Penner said the Fort McMurray fire "has potential to be on a similar scale to Hurricane Katrina, which was the largest catastrophe MDS has ever dealt with." ❧

## ARTBEAT

## BOOK REVIEW

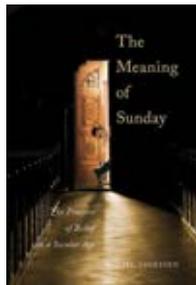
# Future of the church appears grim

*The Meaning of Sunday: The Practice of Belief in a Secular Age.*  
Joel Thiessen. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015, 227 pages.

BY BARB DRAPER

BOOKS AND RESOURCES EDITOR

Following in the footsteps of Reginald Bibby, sociologist Joel Thiessen examines how Canadians of today view Christianity. In his book *The Meaning of Sunday*, he concludes that religion is increasingly being pushed to the margins of society and is regarded as less important as the years go by. Canadians tend to believe that religion should be restricted to the private realm because each person experiences it differently, and they believe religion tends to divide, rather than unite, society. Thiessen is not optimistic about the future of Christianity in Canada.



Between 2008 and 2013, Thiessen interviewed 90 people in and around Calgary. He interviewed 43 males and 47 females from a broad range of ages and from a variety of Christian denominations, both Roman Catholic and Protestant. There is no indication that any of his interviewees were Mennonite. His goal was to compare the religious experiences and beliefs of three groups—active affiliates, marginal affiliates and religious “nones.”

Among his findings are that active affiliates, like everyone else, are not keen on having beliefs imposed on them. There is growing diversity within denominations and congregations because members tend to hang on to their own beliefs, rather than accept the pronouncements of the pastor or the denomination. Thiessen also points

out that studies show active affiliates give more to charity and volunteer more than other Canadians.

Thiessen found that marginal affiliates don't think of religion in terms of costs and rewards, and tend not to believe that religion is necessary for morality.

They turn to the church only because of tradition or to spend time with family. Thiessen calls them “free riders” because they value what the church

provides but are not willing to invest time and energy into the church.

Using some of Bibby's research, Thiessen points out the significant decline, since the 1970s, of Canadian adults and teens who attend church weekly. By 2008, only 37 percent of teens said they believe in God. Thiessen's research shows that this trend is continuing and religious “nones” are the fastest growing group in Canada.

Thiessen argues that if religion is considered from a supply-and-demand perspective, there is too much supply and not enough demand. He says that of the top eight reasons that his interviewees gave for not attending church, only two of them related to what the church was or was not doing. Declining membership in churches is due to growing secularization and because society no longer considers religion important; he doubts there is much that churches can do to change the trend. In the interviews he found that people did not desire greater involvement.

“Where church attendance was once viewed in society as a non-negotiable priority . . . today Canadians are less inclined to bow to tradition or religious authorities

## /// Briefly noted

### On stage: *Mennonite Girls Can Cook*

The popular cookbook, *Mennonite Girls Can Cook*, is now a one-act comedy for the stage. It follows the excitement and confusion that ensue when a small-town cable cooking show hosted by two Mennonite women attracts the attention of a Hollywood producer. Herald Press, publisher of the best-selling *Mennonite Girls Can Cook* and *Mennonite Girls Can Cook Celebrations*, and Blue Gate Musicals, the producers of five hit Broadway-style musicals from Amish Country, have teamed up to produce the play *Mennonite Girls Can Cook*. Herald Press collaborated with 10 Mennonite women in 2011 to produce the bestselling cookbook after they had garnered over a million followers on their blog, [MennoniteGirlsCanCook.ca](http://MennoniteGirlsCanCook.ca). Blue Gate Musicals' entertaining musicals include *Half-Stitched*, *Josiah for President* and *Our Christmas Dinner*. “I am so excited to be working on this fun project,” says scriptwriter Martha Bolton. “The *Mennonite Girls Can Cook* brand has already taken Canada by storm, and now we get to bring them to the Blue Gate stage for this brand new, laughter-filled show that we hope will have theatre-goers coming back for seconds!” For more information about the stage play, visit [bluegatemusicals.com](http://bluegatemusicals.com). —MennoMedia



to compel them to attend religious services regularly," says Thiessen. Until the 1960s, religious leaders and religious organizations played an important role in society, especially in education, health-care and social services. Today, that is no longer the case; in fact, society tries to restrict the influence of religion and there

seems to be a sense that religion does more harm than good. No longer does it provide a common base for society.

While this is an academic book and Thiessen frequently refers to other scholarly research, I found *The Meaning of Sunday* quite readable. The anecdotes from his interviews are interesting, and

the sentences loaded with names of other researchers can be quickly skimmed.

Although Thiessen's conclusions are not optimistic about the future of the church in Canada, he maintains that this is reality. As Mennonite churches plan for the future, they should probably consider what Thiessen has to say. ☘

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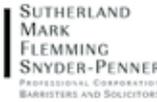
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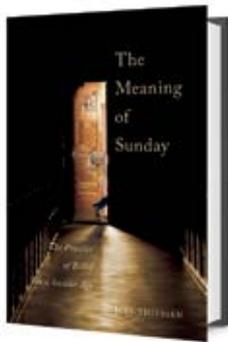


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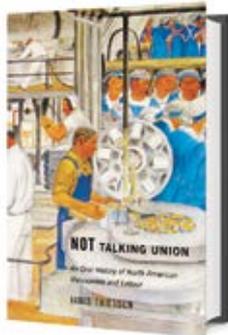


### The Meaning of Sunday The Practice of Belief in a Secular Age

JOEL THIESSEN  
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Contributes to a major ongoing debate concerning the nature and importance of religion in contemporary society.

“Thiessen’s arguments are persuasive and on point.” —Paul Bowlby, Saint Mary’s University



### Not Talking Union An Oral History of North American Mennonites and Labour

JANIS THIESSEN  
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### Eight-hour ‘song-a-thon’ raises money for camps

Mennonite Church Manitoba’s Camps with Meaning gains support through a creative musical event.  
[canadianmennonite.org/songs-support-camp](http://canadianmennonite.org/songs-support-camp)



### Canadian Mennonite University celebrates class of 2016

Eighty-nine graduates are invited to reflect on the question, “What are you going to do with your degree?”  
[canadianmennonite.org/cmu-grad-2016](http://canadianmennonite.org/cmu-grad-2016)



### Director announced for new Mennonite song collection project

The newly-appointed director will lead the song collection in development by Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA.  
[canadianmennonite.org/music-collection-director](http://canadianmennonite.org/music-collection-director)



### Seminar to engage congregations in creation care

An upcoming seminar will highlight theological and practical aspects of caring for the earth and will invite imaginative responses.  
[canadianmennonite.org/creation-care-seminar](http://canadianmennonite.org/creation-care-seminar)





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## FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH

# 'I am still holding out hope that I will be free of this one day'

*Three people talk about living with anxiety and depression*

BY AARON EPP

Young Voices Editor

*What is it like being a young adult journeying with mental illness? Canadian Mennonite spoke with three people from Mennonite Church Canada congregations to find out.*

### Melanie Kampen

Melanie Kampen sought help for her anxiety when it got so bad last summer that she couldn't get out of bed.

A psychiatrist diagnosed the 26-year-old with general anxiety disorder and social performance anxiety disorder. The former is characterized by excessive, ongoing anxiety and worry that interferes with day-to-day activities, while the latter includes fear of situations in which one may be judged and worry about embarrassing or humiliating oneself.

Kampen felt empowered by her diagnosis.

"I finally had a way of naming what I was feeling and [could access] resources that were specific to the mental health disorder that I was struggling with," Kampen says.

Kampen moved from Winnipeg to Toronto last August to begin her doctorate. As a result of a combination of medication and counselling, Kampen's anxiety is now manageable. Starting an exercise routine to aid in dealing with stress has also helped.

Prior to her diagnosis, Kampen saw having a mental health disorder as a horrible thing.

"The less people know about a mental health disorder, the more monstrous or scary or precarious it seems," Kampen says.

Her work last summer at Siloam

Mission, a humanitarian agency in downtown Winnipeg, helped her de-stigmatize mental illness. Kampen received mental health first aid training as part of her work, which opened her eyes to different mental health disorders and their causes. A lot of the people she encountered at Siloam had some sort of mental health disorder.

"I didn't see them as abnormal or monstrous, and I started to realize the double standard I had for myself," Kampen says. "It helped me to accept that I also had a mental health disorder and that was okay. It didn't change me as a person."

### Amanda

Amanda (last name withheld by request) was diagnosed with clinical depression at 15, general anxiety disorder at 18 and dysthymia—a continuous, long-term form of depression—at 28. Now 30, the Winnipeg resident has been hospitalized five times with suicidal thoughts.

"It's a feeling of being a burden—being a burden to my family mostly," she says. "It's pretty much feeling like everybody that I know would have an easier life, a better life, if I wasn't around."

While she cannot currently work as a result of her dysthymia, her career as a high school teacher has had a powerful impact on many people.

She has always made it clear to her

*(Continued on page 36)*

PHOTO BY AARON EPP



*Melanie Kampen manages her anxiety with medication, counselling and exercise.*

## FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH

(Continued from page 35)

students that if they are struggling in any way, whether with depression, physical abuse at home or anything else, they can confide in her. A handful of students have taken her up on that offer, including a few who were suicidal.

Amanda is still in touch with some of them. One graduated from her adult education class as valedictorian and is now a paramedic and mother.

"She tells me on a regular basis that if I hadn't intervened in her situation or offered her whatever help I could give her, that she would not be alive," she says. "It's a pretty amazing feeling to have a student say that to you."

She suggests that young people who are feeling depressed tell an adult that they trust. "So many people struggle, deal with and live with mental illness," she says. "We really have no idea because people tend not to talk about it."

She urges people to keep that in mind, and adds that kindness can go a long way. "Kindness is oftentimes lacking, but it can really make a big difference in someone's day."

PHOTO COURTESY ARIEL BRANDT



*Ariel Brandt describes his depression as 'utterly terrifying.' Still, he remains hopeful.*

### **Adriel Brandt**

Adriel Brandt of Abbotsford, B.C., was diagnosed with major depressive disorder last October. It's a mental disorder characterized by a pervasive and persistent low mood, accompanied by low self-esteem and a loss of interest or pleasure in normally enjoyable activities.

The 24-year-old likens it to being a teenage sports fan sitting with friends in

a restaurant littered with TVs.

"I am incapable of being fully present, emotionally or mentally, with those I love, except it is a stigmatized and impossible-to-even-medically-understand chemical imbalance that causes the imposition, not a television screen," Brandt says. "For a person such as myself, who calls his relationships his vocation and life's fulfillment, an inability to properly appreciate time with loved ones or experience a range of emotion that once defined his character is devastating. It is a profound disability."

The disorder can cause breakdowns in which Brandt experiences crippling anxiety or despair, cannot speak or move, or has urges to strike his head on a wall.

"Recognizing that something I cannot control is controlling me is utterly terrifying," he says.

These heavy, disordered breakdowns occur about once every week. "The rest of the time, and even during those harder times, I am so grateful for where I am and who I have with me," Brandt says, adding that having depression does not mean he feels depressed all the time. "I *am* depressed all the time, because depression is an illness, but I am entirely capable of feeling a whole range of emotion."

While his family and friends are supportive, finding the right medication hasn't been easy. Brandt is currently on what looks to be his fourth unhelpful prescription.

"I certainly have not tried everything . . . but it is a terrifying road ahead," he says, adding later: "I am still holding out hope that I will be free of this one day." ❧

## **Six tips for better self-care**

*Being young is hard, but here are some ideas to help you through*

**BY AARON EPP**

Young Voices Editor

**F**rom the time you are 15 or 16 to the time you are 26 or 28, your brain undergoes rapid cognitive changes.

"It's the busiest time [of brain development] since early childhood, and it will never be that busy again," says Lynda

Loewen, a counsellor at Recovery of Hope, a program in Winnipeg run by Eden Health Care Services. "That time of rapid brain development is a huge part of the reason for impulsivity in that age range."

Self-care can play an important role

in helping you negotiate this time of life when thoughts and feelings are changing. Whether you are struggling with mental illness or simply trying to navigate the stresses of high school or university life, self-care can go a long way to helping you thrive.

Here are some self-care tips:

**1. SLEEP.** It's generally accepted that teenagers need about nine hours on average per night, while for adults seven to eight hours a night appears to be the best amount. Too little sleep can impair memory and physical performance, and can even lead to mood swings. Sleeping allows the body to rest and ensures that people are able to function at an optimal level throughout the day. If you are having trouble sleeping, at least take time to rest. "Scheduled rest is extremely important," Loewen says.

**2. EXERCISE.** In addition to its physical benefits, regular exercise can contribute to a sense of mental well-being. It releases endorphins in the brain, powerful chemicals that energize your spirits and make you feel good. Physical activity also helps relax the muscles and relieves tension in the body. "There are psychiatrists that make daily exercise as much a part of the prescription as medication," Loewen says. "Exercise is every bit important as everyone says it is."

**3. EAT WELL.** Along with getting enough rest and exercising, eating healthy food is foundational to feeling good. "Often when people are spinning out of control, it's one of those three things that are suffering," Loewen says. As with proper rest and exercise, eating well helps energize people so they can perform at optimal levels.

**4. ADD STRUCTURE.** Having a reliable structure to your day is important, Loewen says. Getting up at a reasonable hour, eating at the same times, working at the same times and going to bed at the same time "holds us in and helps us to not spin too far out of control," according to Loewen.

**5. DO THINGS WITH OTHER PEOPLE.** The structure you implement might include weekly activities that involve other people,

such as attending a worship service, prayer group, yoga class or playing on a sports team—something where people are counting on you to be there, and where you can spend time relating to others. "We're not meant to be alone," Loewen says. "We all need each other."

**6. CONFIDE IN SOMEONE.** "If we are left too much with our own thoughts, we lose perspective," Loewen says. "That's just how we're made." Confiding in someone helps us regain our perspective and allows us to have our thoughts and feelings affirmed. "We need to feel normal—to know it's all right to have the struggles that we do."

As a young person, feeling as though the world doesn't make sense and not knowing quite where you fit in is normal and a natural part of transitioning into adulthood.

"The more we can let young people know that the existential angst they feel is developmentally important and not something to be anxious about, the better," Loewen says.

Taking the above steps can make the transition more bearable. When in doubt, find someone to talk to who is older than you that you trust, like a parent, teacher, pastor or counsellor.

"Sometimes it's good to talk to somebody your own age, but sometimes you need the steady influence of someone who's older," Loewen says. ❧

PHOTO COURTESY OF LYNDA LOEWEN

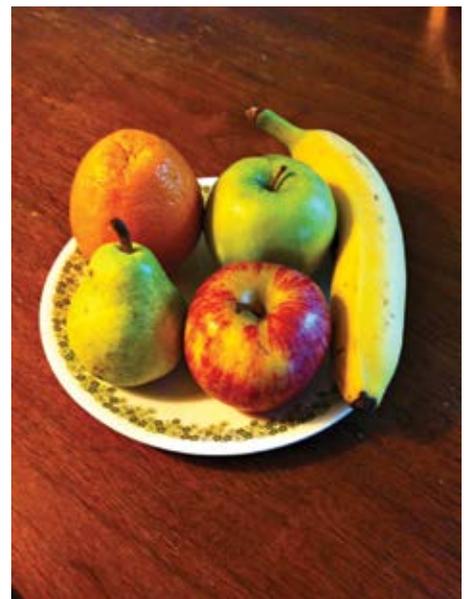


*Self-care can go a long way to helping young people thrive, says Lynda Loewen, a counsellor at Recovery of Hope in Winnipeg.*

PHOTOS THIS COLUMN BY AARON EPP



*In addition to its physical benefits, regular exercise can contribute to a sense of mental well-being.*



*Eating well helps energize people so they can perform at optimal levels.*

## Calendar

### Alberta

**June 10-11:** MCC Relief Sale, at Coaldale.

**June 18:** Camp Valaqua hike-a-thon fundraiser. For more information, call, 403-637-2510 or e-mail valaqua@xplornet.com

**June 18:** MC Alberta general council meeting, at Bergthal Mennonite, Didsbury.

### Saskatchewan

**June 10-11:** MCC Relief Sale at Prairieland Park, Saskatoon.

**June 24-25:** RJC year-end musical performances, at 7:30 p.m.

**June 25:** RJC alumni decade reunions and banquets.

### Manitoba

**June 11:** Seventh annual Mennonite Heritage Village/Eden tractor trek fundraiser, from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

### Ontario

**May 31:** MC Eastern Canada's annual retreat for retired pastors and their spouses, at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp. Theme: "Christianity and the world of Islam." Resource people: Brice Balmer and Tom Mayvaian. For more information, call Glenn and Mary Ellen Zehr at 519-662-6914.

**June 2-4:** Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre graduate student conference. Theme: "Power in perspective(s)." (3) Keynote address by Malinda Berry, assistant professor of theology and ethics at AMBS, at 7 p.m.; topic: "By what authority."

**June 4:** Leamington Mennonite Community Festival at UMEI Christian High School, 8 a.m.-1 p.m.

**June 9:** Voices for Peace concert at Theatre of the Arts, University of Waterloo, 7:30 p.m., with music by Carol Ann Weaver and the Grebel Balinese Gamalan. Go to [uwaterloo.ca/grebel/events/voices-peace](http://uwaterloo.ca/grebel/events/voices-peace).

**June 9-11:** "Way of the Heart: Exploring the Inner Journey Through the Lens of Henri Nouwen" conference

at the University of Toronto, Erindale Campus. Go to [www.henrinouwen.org](http://www.henrinouwen.org) for more information.

**June 9-12:** Global Mennonite Peacebuilding conference and festival at Conrad Grebel University College, with academics, artists and church workers from around the world. Go to [uwaterloo.ca/grebel/gmpc](http://uwaterloo.ca/grebel/gmpc) for information.

**June 11:** Annual bazaar at United Mennonite Home, Leamington.

**June 11, 12:** *Yellow Bellies* historical drama by Theatre of the Beat telling stories of conscientious objectors during WWII at 7:30 p.m. (11) and 2:30 p.m. (12). Tickets available at Conrad Grebel or [uwaterloo.ca/grebel/events](http://uwaterloo.ca/grebel/events).

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



## Classifieds

### Employment Opportunities



**Mennonite Central Committee**

MCC BC JOB OPPORTUNITY  
Senior Accountant, Abbotsford

Mennonite Central Committee is a worldwide ministry of Anabaptist churches that shares God's love and compassion for all in the name of Christ by responding to basic human needs and working for peace and justice.

We require an individual who shares our vision and values, and is qualified to assume the responsibility of Senior Accountant at MCC BC in Abbotsford.

Responsibilities include full cycle accounting for multiple departments, including 10 Thrift Shop locations, payroll, accounting for and management of properties, equipment and other assets owned by MCC BC, various reports and oversight of the donation receipting process.

Individuals with an accounting designation, 5 years' experience in a non-profit environment, familiarity with Great Plains Dynamics and Donor Perfect Online, or similar, preferred. Please apply at <http://mcc.org/get-involved/serve/openings/senior-accountant>



**Vineland**  
United Mennonite Church

Employment Opportunity

Vineland United Mennonite Church invites applications for the half-time position of Associate Pastor of Family Ministries. We are located in a semi-rural community in the heart of Ontario's Niagara Peninsula.

We are seeking a person who is willing to develop effective programming and excels in building and maintaining relationships among the young adults, senior youth and junior youth within a multi-generational setting. The candidate will work alongside other leaders in the congregation as part of the ministries within the church. Start time is negotiable. More information is available at [mcec.ca/jobs/associate-pastor-family-ministries](http://mcec.ca/jobs/associate-pastor-family-ministries).

Applications to be submitted by June 30, 2016 to:  
Henry Paetkau  
MCEC Area Church Minister  
50 Kent Ave.  
Kitchener, ON  
N2G 3R1



**Mennonite Church Eastern Canada**

Or by email to [pastoraltransitions@mcec.ca](mailto:pastoraltransitions@mcec.ca)

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

## Stewardship Consultant

### British Columbia

**Mennonite Foundation of Canada**, a donor-advised charitable foundation committed to helping others live generously with the financial resources God has entrusted to them, is seeking a Stewardship Consultant for our British Columbia office in Abbotsford.

#### As the ideal candidate you will:

- provide charitable gift and estate planning services, and promote biblical stewardship of financial resources,
- support and incorporate MFC's core values of stewardship in your personal life,
- communicate effectively with individuals and in public presentations,
- have knowledge of charitable gift and estate planning,
- be creative, organized, and self-motivated in balancing multiple projects,
- be willing and able to contribute as part of an inter-dependent staff team, and
- have the ability to travel within Canada and the USA.

MFC offers a competitive salary and benefits package. This is a full-time, salaried position. Please submit resume by June 10, 2016 to:

**Gayle Fangrad, Administrative Assistant**  
Mennonite Foundation of Canada  
207-50 Kent Avenue, Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1  
519-745-7821 | [gfangrad@MennoFoundation.ca](mailto:gfangrad@MennoFoundation.ca)



**Hesston College** seeks candidates for **President**. The ideal candidate for Hesston College's next president will be an Anabaptist Christian committed to joining a local MCUSA congregation upon appointment. He/She will also hold a terminal degree (Ph.D.; Ed.D.; J.D.; D.Min.; etc.) and have leadership experience at a higher education institution.

**Strengths** The president must be an imaginative innovator in higher education who seeks solutions from unusual places and voices, positioning Hesston as an attractive option for prospective students and potential faculty and staff. The president must be a collaborative leader who supports, inspires and empowers administrators, faculty and staff through thoughtful decision making processes. The president must possess an astute financial mindset, generating resources including fundraising for Hesston's fiscal future while making tough decisions within the complex economic terrain of higher education.

**Fit** The president must authentically engage a diverse body of communities with skillful, culturally-aware communication, increasing financial support, developing new partnerships and discovering new opportunities for campus engagement. The president must come to understand the challenges faced by a Midwestern Christian two-year college in order to guide Hesston through difficult economic, social and political terrain. The president must be an accessible "pastoral presence" as a committed Anabaptist Christian, for students, faculty and staff.

**Motivation** The president feels called by God and a sense of purpose to fulfill this position. The president is energized by the relational, Christ-centered community of Hesston College and is inspired to further its mission and values. The president prioritizes student learning and development, nurturing interpersonal relationships in order to strengthen the Hesston College Experience.

**Search Process** Nominations and/or letters of application with CV or resume may be submitted to Hesston College Presidential Search Committee at [HC\\_SearchCom@MennoEducation.org](mailto:HC_SearchCom@MennoEducation.org); or through postal mail to: Hesston College Presidential Search Committee, Mennonite Education Agency, 3145 Benham Avenue, Suite #2, Elkhart, IN 46517. Candidates from diverse backgrounds are encouraged to apply. Hesston College is an equal opportunity employer.

### For Rent

Three-bedroom cottage at Red Bay on the Bruce Peninsula, nestled among maple trees. Short walk to sandy beach and small park and includes a rear deck. Available June 25 through September 3. Call Diane at 519-746-4920.

### Help Wanted

Seeking a full time, seasonal **Dump Truck Driver** Must have a clean driving record and dump truck experience. Please email resume to [jeljoehaulage@gmail.com](mailto:jeljoehaulage@gmail.com). Only those selected for an interview will be contacted, and references will be required upon a successful interview.

### Travel

**Visit Europe the Mennonite Way!** Faith-based Hotel Tours to Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Poland and Ukraine, focussing on the Mennonite-Anabaptist heritage. More information online: [mennoniteheritagetours.eu](http://mennoniteheritagetours.eu)

### Advertising Information

D. Michael Hostetler  
1-800-378-2524 x.224  
[advert@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:advert@canadianmennonite.org)

# Passion for building

*Ukrainian pastor dreams of building a new Mennonite church*

BY DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada  
KHERSON, UKRAINE

**S**ergey Deynekin has dreams for Chernobaevka Church in southern Ukraine. A bi-vocational pastor who works in the building trade, he developed architectural plans for a future church building after the congregation's long-time rental location was no longer available and its congregants moved into a vacant house, crowding into two rooms with a pulpit placed near the doorway.

Chernobaevka, a village of about 12,000 people near Kherson, about 130 kilometres north of the Russian-held region of Crimea, has been impacted with tough economic conditions. Deynekin, his wife Lena, and a young six-member ministry team focus on welcoming children and youth into the life of the church. They run an active ministry with weekly and monthly programs for community children, as well as a five-day summer camp.

Through Deynekin's relationships with local church leaders and the Association of Mennonite Churches in Ukraine, the congregation is building connections in the wider community. Congregants dream of building their new church on a street corner for wider visibility and the opportunity to reach out to the community around them through continued ministries for young people, Bible training and social ministries for people who are vulnerable. "We would like our church to be a place where everyone could receive refuge, help and love," Deynekin writes in response to a query about the future.

In his backyard, Deynekin has a workshop for building home construction panels out of styrofoam and wire. Although he

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA PHOTOS BY GORDON JANZEN



*As a bi-vocational pastor, Sergey Deynekin makes styrofoam and wire building panels in his backyard. Once the panels are erected, they are covered with concrete stucco. The resulting structure is sturdy and cost-effective. Deynekin plans to use his panels to build a new home for Chernobaevka Church.*

doesn't have enough time to make his building business flourish as much as it could, his passion and knowledge about construction will help to keep the costs down for Chernobaevka Church's future home. He estimates the new building will cost about \$82,000 plus a lot of volunteer labour from church members. Already congregants have raised \$11,000 through an appeal letter to friends.

Sergey and Lena Deynekin are Mennonite Church Canada partners who have been supported for many years by the Kherson Ministry Support Team, a group of families living in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. ☸



*Chernobaevka Church has a vibrant ministry team that focusses on welcoming children and youth into the life of the church. From left: Yaroslav Budyak, Sergey Deynekin, Denis Ptomkyn, Sasha Potomkyna, Olga Dyneko, Alla Budyak, Lena Deynekina and Sergey Dyneko.*