

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

February 12, 2018

Volume 22 Number 4

## Dying well

End-of-life planning  
for congregations

**FOR SALE**

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## EDITORIAL

## What kind of Mennonite?

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER  
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

In January 2017, a TV show drew attention to Mennonites in Canada. The CBC crime series *Pure* portrayed fictional Mennonite communities in Ontario and Mexico that were running a large illegal drug operation. A Mexican Mennonite drug lord controlled the operation through intimidation and violence.

Mennonite viewers posted their opinions on social media, pointing out the many inaccuracies and the disrespect of our Old Order and Old Colony neighbours. We at *Canadian Mennonite* suspected that many viewers knew little about the beliefs and values of the larger Anabaptist community. We guessed that they would make generalizations about all of us based on what they saw on screen.

Could we bring a bit of clarity to the situation? We commissioned Barb Draper to write “10 things to know about Mennonites in Canada.” The piece included basic information about Mennonite history and beliefs, and pointed to the variety of groups present in the country. We included links to sites of Mennonite service organizations, visitors centres and historical societies. (You can read it at [bit.ly/2iDoDTC](http://bit.ly/2iDoDTC).)

Almost immediately online readers starting clicking on the article, liking our Facebook and Twitter posts, and sharing it in their own circles. Since then, this piece has been viewed more than 41,000 times, and readers have spent an average

time of 6 minutes 44 seconds on it. It has been our most viewed story in the past three years.

Near the top of the most-viewed list are “Old Order Mennonite groups in Ontario are growing” and “Customs vary among Ontario Amish,” both written by Barb. Also on the list is “Mennonite me,” a piece written by a self-described Mennonite atheist who returns to his Old Order roots.

In general society, Mennonites are seen as a quaint countercultural people who stick to their own kind. Some outsiders assume we’re like an exclusive club or an ethnic group. Do you have to be born into the Mennonite church? they ask.

As a “cradle Mennonite” who became a convinced Mennonite by choice, I confess that I like some of the things associated with Mennonite culture. I’ve shopped for solid-wood “Mennonite furniture,” and I enjoy traditional foods at the local MCC relief sale, which bills *pupusas* and spring rolls as Mennonite food, along with apple fritters and *fleisch piroshki*. But I mourn if plain clothing, a colourful quilt or a simplistic TV show were the only things people knew about us.

As people who believe in witnessing about our faith, we should take outsiders’ interest in us seriously. The challenge is for Mennonites in Canada to share with their neighbours something authentic about their life and beliefs. We have a great opportunity to move beyond

the quaint customs, and the selling of “Mennonite recipes” and Amish novels. It’s time to show the difference between a culture and a lived-out faith:

- **WHAT IF** there was no such thing as a “Mennonite name” or maybe if we considered any last name as a candidate to become a Mennonite name? (Because that is already the case in many Anabaptist communities outside of North America.)
- **WHAT IF** our loyalty to the Jesus way led to a theology of inclusion and respect that welcomed all curious bystanders and observers?
- **WHAT IF** we attracted attention because of how we loved other people rather than for our lovely singing?
- **WHAT IF** people saw us dealing with our disagreements in ways that build up our unity as a Christian community rather than splitting off into yet another group?
- **WHAT IF** we were so dedicated to the work of justice and reconciliation that outsiders would scratch their heads in amazement and long to join in?
- **WHAT IF** others sought us out wanting to learn about our commitment to following Jesus rather than wondering about our German dialects?
- **WHAT IF** we were countercultural in an inviting way: rejecting materialism and practising generosity in all aspects of our lives, cultivating friendships outside our own circles, upholding kindness and fidelity in our relationships, and acting with integrity in all our business dealings?

I believe this kind of Mennonite would draw curious seekers into our midst, and that we would be enriched by their presence. Can we practise this kind of faith? That is my hope and my prayer.



## ABOUT THE COVER:

‘Within Mennonite denominations, the closure of churches is also a reality that requires acknowledgement and careful planning, so that their legacy might be a blessing,’ writes Donita Wiebe-Neufeld in her ‘Dying well’ feature beginning on page 4.

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# CANADIAN MENNONITE

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Award-winning member of the Canadian Church Press



GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH FEATURE

# Dying well

*End-of-life planning for congregations*

BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

ALBERTA CORRESPONDENT



CAMP VALAQUA PHOTOS

*In Alberta, Faith Mennonite Church and Vauxhall Mennonite Church closed their doors in 1996 and 2000, respectively. Both congregations gave some funds to Camp Valaqua, a ministry of Mennonite Church Alberta. The contributions enabled the construction of the Faith Retreat Centre, above, and the Vauxhall Cabin, increasing the usability and accessibility of the camp for all.*



**E**very living thing eventually dies, including churches. Just as people who do not plan for death may complicate things for their families, churches that do not plan for eventual closure can leave a mess for congregants and their surrounding communities.

## **A 'stolen' legacy**

The story of the Pineridge Christian Fellowship is complicated and still somewhat painful for some past members. It was founded in 1978 as an outreach of the First and Foothills Mennonite congregations in Calgary, and many people put effort into establishing the church. In 2000, due to theological differences with the then Conference of Mennonites in Alberta, it withdrew from the denomination.

Internal conflicts, and the resignation and sudden death of Pastor Ken Karlensig in 2003, left a hole in leadership, and many people left. A church member took over. With the Fellowship dissolving, he began renting out the facility. A few years ago, some original members of the church, wondering about the legality of the arrangements, began investigating the possibility that the building could be turned over to another Mennonite group. When the group was unwilling to take the matter to court, it was dropped. Currently, two different church groups are renting the building.

When asked why this story still matters, Marvin Baergen, a charter member of the church who left in 2000, says, "It feels like a legacy has been stolen."

Arnold Neufeld, who left Pineridge in 2005, says he is "grateful that there are two congregations still using the facility; that it was not sold and used as a bar."

The Pineridge story may serve as a helpful prod to encourage others to plan ahead for the possibility of sudden changes or the closures of their congregations.



PHOTO BY SHERYL FREY

*After 71 years of faithful service, Riverdale Mennonite Church in Millbank, Ont., closed its doors on Aug. 31, 2017. The building was sold to the Berean Community Church for a dollar the next day.*

### **Steps for dying well**

In a 2012 “Guide to closing a church,” the Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec acknowledge that churches have a finite lifespan. “While we know that the church of Jesus Christ will last, it does not mean that every congregation will last. Scripture records some remarkable local churches that history tells us no longer exist. The church of Jesus Christ is not an organization, it is a living organism: the body of Christ. Organisms do not live forever; they are born, mature, and [most often] procreate and eventually die.”

Within Mennonite denominations, the closure of churches is also a reality that requires acknowledgement and careful planning, so that their legacy may be a blessing. In the 2002 book, *Ending With Hope*, William Chris Hobgood writes that the question dying congregations should ask themselves is: “Because dying may be a normal part of our life, how should we go about doing it most faithfully?”

It’s hard to talk about death. The topic is so difficult that many individuals refuse or delay too long in planning for the inevitable, leaving families to wonder about their desires and to argue over their belongings. Acknowledging that death is part of life, however, and planning for it while bodies, minds and spirits are healthy, is a gift to family, friends and the community when a crisis hits.

The same applies to the church. Planning can prevent or mitigate precipitous and fraught emotions, power plays

and conflicting interests that are often present at the time of a closing. A church that “dies well” has an opportunity to be a hopeful witness to God’s ongoing work and a blessing to its people and community.

In her examination of what makes a church closure healthy, L. Gail Irwin, the author of *Toward the Better Country: Church Closure and Resurrection*, cites the example of Mount Tabor Methodist, a church that zig-zagged through four years of discussion before closing. The congregation, while admittedly making some mistakes, kept good relationships with its larger denomination and was able to manage the stewardship of assets to preserve them for uses consistent with its historical mission and needs within its community.

A variety of issues bear consideration in church “end-of-life” planning, including understanding land and building ownership; working with church records; community relationships; and legacy planning, which includes an acknowledgement of what is lost as well as what is given to the ongoing ministry of the wider church:

**1. THE QUESTION** of land and building ownership is important and may not be well understood by many in the pews.

While Mennonite congregations tend to own their property and make decisions about it, they are subject to laws and regulations meant to guard the original intent of the organization. Churches are

granted charitable status and receive tax benefits. When church land and buildings are sold, the proceeds do not belong to members of the congregation but are required to go back into a ministry or program similar in intent to their original purposes.

Churches can help decide what this might be. In Alberta, Faith Mennonite Church and Vauxhall Mennonite Church closed their doors in 1996 and 2000, respectively. Both congregations gave some funds to Camp Valaqua, a ministry of Mennonite Church Alberta. The contributions enabled the construction of the Faith Retreat Centre and the Vauxhall Cabin, increasing the usability and accessibility of the camp for all.

A real estate lawyer in Calgary says it is a good idea for churches to know the history of their property, and to consider how they would wrap up their ministry if the need should ever arise. “A number of properties have caveats registered against their land title,” he said. “If they ever cease to be a church, the property could . . . go back to the city for a dollar.”

It is helpful for a church to include a dissolution section in its constitution, stating its intention for the property in the event of a closure. While this does not prevent subsequent revision as a congregation changes, it does provide a clear intention that may be regularly discussed and reviewed so members are more likely to share a common vision.

**2. THE PRESERVATION** of a

congregation's history and records is an often-overlooked part of long-term planning for congregational life and the eventual closing of a church. If a church's records have not regularly been archived offsite, important history may be lost or they may become inaccessible to those who wish to view them.

Ted Regehr, Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta's archivist, recently received boxes of documents from an individual concerned that changing demographics at the church could result in loss of the history contained in the files. Shortly thereafter, Regehr received a call that the church board had not authorized the transfer, so the documents had to be returned to the church.

In order for churches to avoid a hard situation like this, Regehr suggests that "every five years, get someone to review [the church records] and send copies over to the archives. . . . I know there are churches that have lost important documents. Churches need desperately to keep some of these for their own purposes." The archive can help ensure safe storage with an offsite second copy of important papers. The protection, he says, "is twofold. It protects the interests of the church itself, legally and historically, and the interests of the archives."

Annual meetings, stories and photographs of important events, correspondence and some legal documents are all parts of a church's history and legacy that an archive can help to preserve and make available for research.

Regehr also notes that many church records are now electronic, and archives and churches both need to think about how the preservation of their history will continue into the future.

**3. IT IS** important for churches to recognize that they are important to their surrounding communities. Jennifer Lynn Baskerville writes in *Ending With Hope*: "It has been well documented that religious properties contribute significantly to community life through the space they offer for childcare programs, arts programs and meeting spaces for various recovery and self-help groups."

While a church needs to pay attention

*While a church needs to pay attention to how it might enable a healthy grieving process for its members if a closure occurs, it is also important for it to attend to the expressions of loss that may be present in its wider community.*

to how it might enable a healthy grieving process for its members if a closure occurs, it is also important for it to attend to the expressions of loss that may be present in its wider community. Planning for healthy closure includes thinking through meaningful ways of celebrating past ministry, saying goodbye, and blessing the present and future ministries that may be enabled through healthy closure planning.

**4. CHURCH CLOSINGS** and changes are a natural part of the church's life. While individuals and churches are healthy, it is a good time to plan ahead to die well, so that a legacy of blessing and continuing ministry remains as the lasting legacy of a church's life.

*Ending With Hope* includes a chapter

called "A judicatory perspective." In it, congregations that are considering closing are encouraged to utilize outside, expert help. "Incapable, 'avoiding' and even 'corrupt' are often some of the words that can describe the congregation that tries to settle its final affairs alone," Hobgood writes. "[T]he danger is always present that issues of survival, an incomplete understanding of the options and fear of the unknown will weigh so heavily on members that good decisions cannot be made."

This help, in the form of a specialized pastor, conference leadership or other specialist, can provide energy to a tired church, pastoral care to leaders, and a sense of unity in purpose, while also attending to the legal and practical matters that may not be top of mind for a struggling congregation. ❧

### ❧ For discussion

1. Are you familiar with, or have you ever been part of, a church that decided to close? How did the congregation arrive at the decision to close? Looking back, was it a good decision? Who looked after the records and the financial details? What would you do differently next time?
2. If your congregation closed its doors, what would you miss most? What emotions would you experience? How would the history of the congregation be preserved?
3. In what situations is it time to publicly discuss the closing of a church? Why might we be apt to wait too long to begin this discussion? What are our biggest fears? Can we see letting go of a church as part of God's larger plan?
4. As you look at the trajectory of your congregation over the next 20 years, is there a possibility that it might close during that timeframe? What decisions would need to be made in that eventuality? How beneficial would it be to include a dissolution section in your congregation's constitution?

—BY BARB DRAPER

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## VIEWPOINTS

✉ **Anabaptist Essentials**  
**'a quintessential travesty'**

## /// Readers write

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

The following letter was abridged from one originally sent to Herald Press, the publisher of Palmer Becker's Anabaptist Essentials.

**I'M WRITING TO** express amazement that you would have published *Anabaptist Essentials*, when what it presents is highly simplistic and seriously uninformed.

Consider that there is no mention of the role in the 16th-century Anabaptist movement of Erasmus, the outstanding peace theologian of that century. Not to have even acknowledged Erasmus—or the English

(Continued on page 8)

## FROM OUR LEADERS

## Receiving is important

RYAN SIEMENS

The tale “The Christmas Guest,” as told by Johnny Cash on his album *Christmas with Johnny Cash*, is a fable about an old man, Conrad, who receives a message from an angel that the Lord will appear to him on Christmas Eve. Conrad readies his place, expectant for Jesus to knock at his door. But throughout the night, Jesus doesn't appear as expected. Instead, three strangers appear, all seeking compassion, which Conrad provides.

This is a familiar story, one we have heard countless times. These stories echo the words of Jesus from Matthew 25: “*Whatever you do to the least of my people, you do unto me.*” Yet for most of us, we prefer to be the ones doing or giving, and we are much less comfortable being the ones who receive.

But recently my family was graciously blessed by those who stopped what they were doing and gave. It was 6:30 on Christmas Eve morning when I received an email from Via Rail informing us that our train was going to be four hours late.



For a moment, Sandra and I entertained the thought, “The car is packed. Let's just drive to Winnipeg. We would be halfway there before the train even arrives in Saskatoon.”

But we resisted. The train ride was our surprise Christmas present for our three train-loving boys. And so we waited, and at 5:30 p.m., a whopping eight hours late, we boarded the train and settled into the

*But recently my family was graciously blessed by those who stopped what they were doing and gave.*

Dome Car to enjoy hot chocolate on our very own Polar Express.

Well, although the Polar Express eventually made it to the North Pole, our train didn't even make it to Manitoba. After stalling out for hours, losing heat in -30-degree temperatures and power to the toilets, we were informed at 8:30 a.m. the next morning that we'd be backing up to the town of Spy Hill, Sask., population 300, where we would find warmth, toilets and much more.

As Sandra, the boys and I walked

into the Spy Hill community hall on Christmas morning, we were greeted with hot coffee, warm pancakes and smiling faces. When the volunteer fire chief learned from the RCMP that there was a frozen train with 98 passengers making an unexpected stop, the town cancelled its Christmas plans to welcome these unexpected guests.

The mayor put a blade on his truck to clear a path from the tracks to the hall. The grocer opened the doors to his store so food could be prepared. And soon churchgoers who were preparing to gather for Christmas morning worship came over to the community hall to ask how they could help to welcome these cold

strangers through their doors. There was food, singing, toys and community—all the ingredients for a blessed Christmas Day.

And while we finally did arrive in Winnipeg by bus at 7 p.m. on Christmas Night, when tired boys were able to finally open presents, it was the gift of Spy Hill's hospitality that reminded me of the importance of receiving.

*Ryan Siemens is executive minister of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan.*

(Continued from page 7)

Reformers—in the section about “How did early Anabaptists come to this faith?” is inexcusable in a book that claims to give an overview of church history and answer that question accurately.

Abraham Friesen, in his book *Erasmus, the Anabaptists and the Great Commission*, stated: “It was indeed the impact of Christian humanism in general,

and that of Desiderius Erasmus in particular—only partially mediated by Ulrich Zwingli—that gave rise to Anabaptism.” There you have it. Erasmus was the primary mediator and agent of the Christian peace tradition to first-generation Anabaptists.

Given such apparent woeful ignorance and caricature, one discovers that the rest of Becker’s book is also a quintessential travesty of “what makes Anabaptism

## KINGDOM YEARNINGS

# ‘Those who are in Christ will live forevermore’

RYAN JANZTI

I love doing funerals. As a young pastor, I now have nine under my belt. It seems I enjoy them more with each one. To be honest, I haven’t had any difficult funerals to do yet. No tragic circumstances or painful dynamics to deal with. Each one being a dear old saint, ready to be united with Christ in the heavens.

I did not expect this. I never considered it. I think I figured it would just be one of the ministerial responsibilities I dutifully fulfill in the midst of the other “important” tasks that I really care about. In seminary, I learned how to conduct a good funeral. I watched and asked many careful questions. However, I did not anticipate the immense privilege and honour that it is to lead a funeral. I had no idea I would enjoy it so much!

It is at the point of death that the rubber hits the road for our faith. This is where the good news of Jesus Christ really, truly matters.

We were not created to die. But sadly this has become our destiny. It’s the wages of our sin, the Apostle Paul writes. Even with a good long life, the body withers and weakens, and breath is snuffed out. Life as we know it ends.

And so we arrive at the funeral. Friends

and family are gathered in the pews. I stand in the pulpit. The lifeless body of the departed lies before us in a fancy wooden box, never to be seen again. The encouragement of the deceased’s warm smile never to be received, words of wise instruction never to be heard, rolling laughter never to lift our spirits. The loved one is gone.

It is in these moments that I am privileged to declare the good news of Jesus Christ. I take part in the sacred honour of declaring life, where before us all signs point to death. What a joy! This is not the end of the story, I declare. I point to Jesus, our Creator who was crucified, but three days later he returned to life. The Deceiver had levied the best trick in his

died will receive their new resurrection bodies. One day, when all things are fully and finally made new, they will work and play in the new heavens and new earth. It will be beautiful. God will be there. Death won’t even be a memory. Life will abound.

The shovelfuls of earth hit the casket. More heaving sobs are released. The mourners turn away from the graveside with weak knees and exhausted emotions. Life going forward is not going to be easy. It’s difficult to adjust. The loved one will be dearly missed and there will be tears for months to come. But we walk away with great hope. Life has overcome death.

This may be unusual to say, but I am looking forward to the next funeral I will



*I take part in the sacred honour of declaring life, where before us all signs point to death. What a joy!*

bag. But it wasn’t enough. Jesus demonstrated in power and glory that he is greater than death. Because of Jesus, life will reign. Because of Jesus, those who are in Christ will live forevermore.

Rather than the cold, stiff corpse that lies before us, our loved one lives on in the heavens, in the presence of the Lord. One day all those saints who have

have the honour of officiating. There’s no better time to proclaim the good news of Jesus.

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

unique” over against all other traditions, especially with the repeated juxtapositions of what “Many Christians emphasize” over against the obviously only valid what “Anabaptist Christians emphasize.” This is beyond naïve.

For those with any significant awareness of church history—of the incredible breadth, depth and beauty of the ancient roots/routes; of the classical tradition; and of multiple exemplary expressions the world over and throughout church history of faithfulness that Becker corrals as unique to Anabaptism—this book is not only sadly without merit, but it is deleterious to any kind of ecumenicity, peacemaking or spirit of “generous orthodoxy” one would hope for in today’s fragmented world.

WAYNE NORTHEY, AGASSIZ B.C.

### ✉ Low German is not a ‘dialect,’ but an original language

RE: “THE QUIET labour of a Low German translator” Jan. 1, page 22.

There is a serious error and misunderstanding in Will Braun’s article, in which Low German is referred to as a dialect. It is, in fact, an original language, older by centuries and parent of High German. It was called Low (Plaut) because it was the language of the northern European seaboard with its low elevation. Low German was the language of the London office of the North Sea shipping company, the Hanse. Perhaps it was never a written language because of its many variations, of which Mennonite Plautdietsch is one. I’m grateful that the Mennonite variant is now reduced to writing, although spelling and the representation of the unique sounds of Low German are not yet agreed on.

Years ago I was able to donate my Low German New Testament to a friend who was working with Mennonites whose only language was Low German.

WALTER KLAASSEN, SASKATOON

### ✉ Being ready means being in community

RE: “GOD WITH us with God,” Dec. 11, 2017.

For me, being ready for Christmas means being in community.

Let’s go back to the beginning. God spoke: “*Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature so they can be responsible for the fish of the seas, the birds in the air, the cattle, and, yes, the earth itself*” (Genesis 1:26, The Message Bible).

To be ready is also to bring healing and hope. I

have listened to many stories from people for whom Christmas is the worst time of the year. It makes me sad when people are judged by others who do not understand the cause of their actions or their inability to change. Many suffer from a variety of issues beyond their control: mental illness and poverty, to name two. We are all shaped by our individual history and have scars and are flawed. In Matthew 7:1, Jesus said: “*Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged.*”

Our vertical relationship with God through Jesus is connected to our relationship in the horizontal, all-inclusive body. In Matthew 25:34, Jesus said: “*Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.*”

I long for the time when all refugees will find safety—like Mary, Joseph and Jesus did—when the lonely and excluded will find acceptance and inclusion at the banquet table, like those in Luke 14.

So, am I ready for Christmas? Maybe the question needs to be, “Are we ready?”

ENOS KIPFER, LONDON, ONT.

### ✉ How long will it take?

HOW MANY YEARS will it be before most members of the Mennonite community accept LGBTQ people without reservation or bias? When will the preachy stop using Scripture to attack these people?

I recall as a teenager in the 1950s hearing adult conversation about remarried divorced people as “living in sin.” Many Mennonite churches refused to marry divorced people. They had to rely on a civil ceremony or another church for their marriage.

Princess Margaret and Lord Snowden couldn’t be married in the Church of England because Snowden was divorced. Now Prince Harry will be able to marry a divorcee in the Church of England this year.

The same has happened in our Mennonite community. Our pastors marry divorced people, who are warmly welcomed by our membership.

What needs to happen for LGBTQ people to receive a similar welcome from our Mennonite churches. Will we have to wait for the preachy objectors to die before a broad change in attitude happens? I pray that we will find leaders who will make this happen sooner rather than later.

HERB KORNELSEN, ST. CATHARINES, ONT.

*The author is a member of Grace Mennonite Church in St. Catharines.*



PHOTO BY HEIKE MARTIN

*At Assembly 16 in Harrisburg, Pa., representatives of the Anne Zernike Fund, which supports women pursuing theological education, honoured Cynthia Peacock, second from right, for her pioneering service, calling her 'a source of inspiration for many.'*

## TESTIMONY

# Overcoming barriers, building empowerment

CYNTHIA PEACOCK  
MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE

**B**oundaries, barriers, blocks, bridges and empowerment have been very real to me. Through the years, I have learned to face challenges and to grow stronger in mind and beliefs.

The Christian community in India has played an important role in bringing opportunities for women to become educated and liberated from the bondage of the belief that they are without their own identity.

But Anabaptist churches have much work to do to help both men and women join as co-workers to extend the kingdom of God among all people, using all their potential to contribute to society, family and the church.

For the past nine years, I have been involved with Mennonite World Conference (MWC), first with the Deacons Commission and now as a regional representative responsible for relationships with churches in India and Nepal. I promote MWC so that all our churches, especially those in remote areas that often feel abandoned and

lonely, know they are part of a worldwide body who cares, prays and loves.

This role involves working with male leadership. It has been a long journey to bring an understanding that I am not a threat, but a sister in Christ.

Building a trusting relationship takes time, effort and patience to cross boundaries. In some cases, I feel I have failed but I continue to look for opportunities to negotiate. I keep up the faith and hope to see change.

While serving with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) for 38 years, I became involved with our Anabaptist churches and got to interact with women who were struggling to use their gifts and talents in the church.

A few courageous women established the All India Mennonite Women's Conference in the early 1970s. We are also working to establish the Theologically Trained Anabaptist Women of India for trained women who are not being used well enough in their churches.

We persevere—despite barriers to acceptance for moral and financial support—trusting our labour will bear fruit someday.

I have seen the women of Tollygunge Christian Fellowship, my own congregation, bring change. Women in this church have made an impact spiritually and socially while growing to understand how to serve as a woman. It was a woman who started Sunday school with a handful of local children, and now there are more than a hundred attending. Women began to preach the Word in a culture that was still very male-dominated. Women lead in worship, and all major church decisions are made along with women.

Finally, I share my own story. My marriage began to break down as early as 10 days after I got married. With the teaching from my pious mother that the vows made in the church between husband and wife must be honoured, I humbly submitted for five long years of abuse.

One night, when I faced death along with my children, I forgot all the condemnation and I left with just a set of clothes and milk for my son and my unborn daughter.

After many struggles, thanks to the support of close family and people at MCC who stood by me without judging me, I began to gain strength to understand what it means to be a Christian and to move on. They taught me to overcome barriers and build bridges of love and understanding. I grew to be strong and stubborn, but also patient, as I used my gifts.

I was able to overcome fear, shyness and low self-esteem. I boldly told my story when asked, but very carefully, since I didn't want my work with the churches to be jeopardized. *"Apart from me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5b) and *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"* (Philippians 4:13) have become part of me as I face barriers.

Thanks be to God and to all who have given me courage, support, counsel and inspiration, and who stood by me in my darkest moments. I now have a responsibility to be and do the same in whatever ways I can. ☸

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

## On meeting St. Francis

DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD  
ALBERTA CORRESPONDENT

I wouldn't normally invite a stranger to stay in our house, but there was something about Jane (a pseudonym) that changed me.



animal-loving vegetarian. She was considerate and never asked for anything. She was grateful to sleep in a good bed, to wash her clothes, take a shower and eat a few meals at our family table.

I was waiting for my son to finish a late hockey practice when she approached. She was about 30, slim and nice-looking. I noticed her beautiful black leather knee-high boots.

"Excuse me. I feel awkward asking, but could I trouble you for a ride to the Tim Horton's?" she asked. "It's dark and I don't feel comfortable walking."

"Sure," I replied. "I wouldn't want to walk there alone either. Are you meeting someone?"

She said no. Something about the way she answered felt odd, so I asked if she was all right. Her face crumpled, she sat down and her story spilled out.

Jane was planning to spend the night at the doughnut shop when the recreation centre closed. She was homeless, having lost her job, which meant she had to move out of her apartment. Her car was stolen and she was estranged from her wealthy family. All of this had happened a few months earlier.

She had managed in the meantime by staying with a neighbour and working odd jobs until the neighbour couldn't—or wouldn't?—help her anymore. Her options had disappeared. This would be her third night sleeping at a fast-food joint.

It was late, so I took her home with me. She collapsed in our guest room and slept soundly.

The next day we talked. Jane said God spoke to her and told her what to do. She was an accountant but felt she could not continue to work for a corrupt system. She wanted to live simply and help people. She was a wonderful house guest, doing dishes and asking what else she could do. Her conversation was intelligent and engaging. She was an

Jane was wonderful, gentle . . . and delusional. At least I started feeling that way about her as she ended sentences with "it came to me" or "God told me." She claimed to be telepathic, saying she could pick up on feelings and auras.

Hotels and homeless shelters were intolerable as options for her. She wouldn't talk about searching for a job. She wondered why God was testing her. After I would suggest something, she often lit up, saying God told her I would say that exact thing, so its truth was confirmed in her mind. I believe she believed it. She did let me challenge and push her to consider that her understandings might be wrong; however, her "sendings" tended to

*Jane reminds me of a modern St. Francis of Assisi. Like him, she was estranged from a wealthy family and refused to participate in consumerist corruption. She, too, is a gentle soul who loves God and will go to great lengths to obey.*

quickly confirm her original ideas.

She called a relative, who agreed to take her in, but after we purchased a non-refundable bus ticket, the relative reneged. I never got straight answer from Jane about her family background, but it was obvious she felt rejected by someone she thought might love her. That hurt.

She stayed one more night with us. The next day I packed a lunch and encouraged her go to a women's shelter. To her credit, she did check it out, but she sent an email saying the shelter was horrible and she was at a McDonald's for the night again. She thanked me for the two-day respite



GOOGLE ART PROJECT PHOTO  
*'The Ecstasy of St. Francis of Assisi,' by Blas Muñoz, painted circa 1683-86.*

and did not ask for anything more.

I'm left with a mix of emotions and thoughts. Jane reminds me of a modern-day St. Francis of Assisi. Like him, she was estranged from a wealthy family and refused to participate in consumerist corruption. She, too, is a gentle soul who loves God and will go to great lengths to obey.

While our interactions led me to think she likely has mental issues, perhaps St. Francis did, too. I wonder how the people around St. Francis reacted to him? Did they pack lunches and send him away, unable to solve his problems and relieved that the delusional God-talk wouldn't persist?

This encounter has left me wondering how, where and through whom God speaks, and how I should listen. Jane may not be a saint and she may not be mentally healthy, but the two days we spent together have given me a lot to think about. ☸

## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Loewen**—Junia Eva (b. Jan. 6, 2018), to Susanne Guenther Loewen and Kris Loewen, Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Peters**—Otto Herbert Henry (b. Nov. 24, 2017), to Zach and Julie Peters, Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Petit**—Oren Dennis (b. Dec. 31, 2017), to Tabitha and Dennis Petit, Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Regier**—Jane Marijka (b. Dec. 25, 2017), to Jared and Rachel Regier, Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Swartzentruber**—Felix Thomas (b. Jan. 11, 2018), to Kathleen and Daniel Swartzentruber, Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

**Thacker Neufeldt**—Sidera Annahelena (b. Dec. 2, 2017), to Linnea Thacker and Tim Neufeldt, Toronto United Mennonite.

### Marriages

**Carter/Koole**—Curtis Carter and Jolien Koole, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., Nov. 4, 2017.

### Deaths

**Bergen**—Agathe (Friesen), 83 (b. Oct. 21, 1934; d. Dec. 27, 2017), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Braun**—Anna (Toews), 102 (b. Jan. 24, 1915; d. Jan. 20, 2018), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

**Braun**—Joanne Jane (nee Fehr), 57 (b. March 25, 1960; d. Jan. 15, 2018), Morden Mennonite, Man.

**Cassel**—Aleda, 103 (b. Dec. 25, 1914; d. Jan. 6, 2018), Preston Mennonite, Cambridge, Ont.

**Froese**—Susan, 93 (b. Nov. 5, 1924; d. Dec. 31, 2017), Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Godfrey**—Violet, 107 (b. Aug. 8, 1910; d. Nov. 12, 2017), Danforth Mennonite, Toronto.

**Heinrichs**—Erdman (Ed), 93 (b. Dec. 31, 1924; d. Jan. 14, 2018), Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man.

**Hiebert**—Abe, 90 (b. Nov. 14, 1927; d. Dec. 21, 2017), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Janzen**—Mary (nee Teichroeb), 90 (b. Jan. 27, 1927; d. Jan. 11, 2018), Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

**Kohn**—Elizabeth (nee Klassen), 91 (b. July 30, 1926; d. Aug. 2, 2017), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

**Kornuta**—Margarete (nee Epp), 90 (b. April 6, 1927; d. Jan. 17, 2018), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Sawatzky**—William, 84 (b. Aug. 22, 1933; d. Jan. 19, 2018), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Schneider**—Donald Peter, 82 (b. June 17, 1935; d. Dec. 31, 2017), Poole Mennonite, Ont.

**Wellendorf**—Irmgard, 89 (b. July 12, 1928; d. Nov. 10, 2017), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones announcements within four months of the event. Please send Milestones announcements by email 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



In February 1928, the first trainload of Mennonite farmers from the Prairies arrived in Yarrow, British Columbia, with prospects of farming the newly accessible land in the Fraser Valley. The introduction of raspberry and strawberry farming in the early 1930s increased the viability of these farms. The photo shows Len Doerksen (b. 1936) with his little brother Dan (b. 1947) hauling strawberries behind the family's Willys sedan at their 2.5-hectare farm on Clayburn Road near Abbotsford in the late 1940s. Agricultural innovation and land usage issues continue to be matters of high interest among both urban and rural Mennonites. What matters are most pressing for you?

*Text: Jon Isaak / Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies*

*Photo: Jacob J. Doerksen Family Photo Collection / Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies*



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

## WOMEN WALKING TOGETHER IN FAITH

# Learning to let go

BY CARMEN BRUBACHER



It takes me a long time to learn a lesson. The book *Necessary Losses* by Judith Viorst was required reading when I was in seminary, and my lasting impression of its message was that life is a series of losses. Right from birth, life is a process of letting go. My instinctive response was that, while there was truth in Viorst's writing—one of her other books, *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* also has lots of truth!—I did not like it one bit.

PHOTO BY RAY BRUBACHER



*Four generations of women at various stages of learning to let go. Pictured from left to right: Margaret Brubacher, Erma Birky, Sophia Heidebrecht and Carmen Brubacher.*

Fast forward two decades, and I am working as a chaplain in long-term care. "What is life about?" I recently asked one of our wise residents. "Letting go," was her response. Hmm. Really? Again, my gut response was to push back. I expected a "but" to follow. But we hang on to what's important, but greater things are yet to come. Nothing came. My oldest son had just begun university, and the feeling of "letting go" was very raw. I told my wise friend, "I am not good at letting go." She smiled.

When the last of our children became too big for our stroller, I snipped pieces of material from the seat and I put a square into each of their "special boxes" so they could hold on to a piece of that time of life. You might say I am doing a good job at passing on my resistance to necessary losses or letting go.

My resistance to letting go may be somewhat unexpected, since my husband and I have done our fair share of moving. We have had to "let go" of many dear friends and places. While I don't find moving in the least

bit easy, I have not been averse to it; I see our moves as part of God's larger vision or call for us.

So why do I see letting go in other parts of life differently? Why do I resist letting go of my children? Why has it been hard to let go of my vocational identities?

I understand that people who are the most adept at adjusting to aging are the ones who see themselves as part of something larger; they realize that life has a larger purpose and that they remain part of that larger picture even if their role has changed. In my limited experience, almost everyone struggles with identity and meaning as they age, but those who see themselves as part of life's broader flow and purpose continue to see the beauty and sanctity of life.

Perhaps I struggle with letting go because it's my eyes that are dim, not the eyes of my elderly friends. I have wanted to keep my children close, but now I think it's my job to release them to explore the world with their own creativity and courage, not mine. Letting go means a constant changing of roles while still holding fast to the shared identity of being part of God's vision for the world. I think I kind of knew that, but remember, I really learn lessons slowly.

I wonder what you are letting go of in your particular life stage. I wonder what we as churches need to let go of in order to be a part of God's ongoing work in the world. I wonder how we root ourselves in our shared identity as God's beloved ones.

When I sit with people at the end of their life, I often read the end of I Corinthians 13: "Now I see in the mirror dimly, but then I will see face to face." I see oh so dimly. May I let go in order to embrace the world that God calls my children into, and that God calls me and you into. May my vision grow sharper as I age and as I learn from the wisdom of those near the final stages of their lives. ❧

*Carmen Brubacher was licensed toward ordination as a chaplain at Forest Heights Long-term-care Home in Kitchener, Ont., last fall at Waterloo North Mennonite Church, her home congregation. She currently represents the Women of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada on the Mennonite Women Canada board.*

PHOTO BY CARMEN BRUBACHER



*End of an era. The author has mixed feelings about letting go of the family stroller that transported her four children: left to right, back row: Nathan, Sophia and Conrad; and Jesse Heidebrecht in the stroller.*



## GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

# The in-between years

*Emerging adulthood conference addresses ambiguous life stage*

BY HENRY NEUFELD

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*  
VANCOUVER

**E**merging adult: it's a relatively new category to describe the life stage between adolescence and the adult they will become.

They are no longer teens but are not yet fully independent adults. The term "emerging adults" usually describes young adults who don't have children, who don't have their own home, probably have not determined their lifelong career or completed their education.

It's an "in between" ambiguous period, a period of instability. It's a time to distance oneself from parental ties; in effect, a time to leave home, establish new friends, test new ideas and make independent decisions. It's a pivotal time, a major transition often accompanied by feelings of lost identity. Legally, many youth become "adult" at age 18, but socially, culturally, relationally, they are still at loose ends.

The category is fairly new because of the longer time youth often live in their parental home due to the cost of education and housing. These young adults are seeking their own identity. They need to figure out who they are, their vocational direction and young-adult relationships. These factors are often compounded by the young person's financial insecurity, general instability in life, and feeling trapped in the pre-adult phase. It's time to flourish or founder.

A newborn infant's growth stages can be readily charted; at two, six or 12 months, clear developmental markers indicate the child's growth. Comparable charts for emerging adults are not readily available, especially not for spiritual growth.

Thomas Bergen, a residence coordinator at Vancouver's Menno Simons Centre, a home for 23 university students

located near the University of British Columbia (UBC), spoke recently at a mini-conference on "ministry to emerging adulthood" in Vancouver. He wondered what such a chart for young adults might look like, then pointed to Ephesians 4, where Paul told the believers there that they were to no longer be as infants, but to speak the truth in love.

Gil Dueck of Columbia Bible College in Abbotsford described young adults' efforts to navigate life's decisions, including faith issues. He noted a lot of interest in analyzing the patterns of emerging-adult behaviour. "The young people of today aren't that different," he said, noting, though, that "the world around us is changing rapidly."

He pointed out that emerging adults are exploring newfound freedoms. They often face "a decade of instability" as they navigate their way through life. Adulthood usually indicates the confidence of knowing, or at least thinking they know. He cited young people's use of Twitter, while their parents might still be mastering email and Facebook; the latter are tools of the past for emerging adults.

UBC chaplain Sue Perry observed that emerging adults find new friends throughout the internet and are connected to people all around the world; their peers are not necessarily local, she said.

"How do emerging adults know when we've reached adulthood and what should the transition look like?" asked Dueck. There is no clear path because developmental markers have not been developed for emerging adults. And for good reason. By the time of early adulthood, varied personalities and habits have developed, but there is no one clear path to follow.

Instead, the options for the emerging adult are endless, and that doesn't make their choices any easier. Some will work, some will attend Bible school, some will travel, some will drift for awhile, unsure of what to do. Whichever path they follow, it will likely have one major impact: it will involve taking some risks. Some paths will have a dead end, but all will help develop skills to stand alone. In addition to leaving home, some will take a break from church, not attending at all or trying different churches and exploring other faiths. Churches, on the other hand, tend to give

PHOTO BY SCOTT THOMAS

**Ray Dirks, left, and his project partner Manju Lodha, right, receive the 2017 Lieutenant Governor's Award for the Advancement of Interreligious Understanding from Janice Filmon, Manitoba's lieutenant governor, on Jan. 10. Dirks, founder and curator of the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery in Winnipeg, has worked with Lodha for more than a decade to foster respect and understanding between cultures and faiths through a variety of art projects. Dirks also released his book *Along the Road to Freedom: Mennonite Women of Courage and Faith* on Nov. 8, 2017, at the Canadian Museum of Human Rights in Winnipeg. What began as an exhibit that toured to 20 locations in Canada and the U.S. became a book of all the paintings and stories in the exhibit. *Along the Road to Freedom* is available through [CommonWord.ca](http://CommonWord.ca).**



little freedom to those youth who want to explore.

Dueck said that youth today are sometimes raised with unhelpful ideas—"Be whatever you want to be," or "You can do anything"—when these sentiments are not realistic. The young person hitting adulthood must face the question: "Who am I,

and who am I in the eyes of others?" he said.

One student said that self-motivated actions are most important. "My generation is anti-establishment," he said, "and church ministry is establishment. We don't like to be told what to do. Structure is an offence. . . . I don't know why I should be in church."

"We need to hear of Jesus as love, as

a prophet and as a social teacher," said Dueck, adding that church is still one of the few places where young people can meet one another. Emerging adults need to see values communicated and adult behaviour that is conviction-driven, he concluded. ✎

## /// Staff changes

### Pastoral transitions in Ontario

• **CARRIE LEHN** was licensed toward ordination at Ottawa Mennonite Church on Dec. 10, 2017. She is in her fifth year of doing ministry at the church, and previously worked in Winnipeg as a youth pastor at Weetamah Salvation Army Church. Weetamah means "go tell them" in Cree and shows the church's desire to be relevant in the primarily Indigenous Canadian community in north central Winnipeg. Before that she was a youth worker at Marymound in Winnipeg, a centre that "uses a holistic approach that includes meeting the physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual needs of young people in care." She graduated with an undergrad theology degree from Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg.



• **CHUNG VANG** was licensed toward ordination at First Hmong Mennonite Church in Kitchener on May 15, 2017. He came to Canada from Thailand in 1985 as a father with his wife Choua and two small children, though he is originally from Laos. Within a week in Canada, he began working as a welder. In 1990, he went to school to get his high school diploma, and then studied theological education by extension through the Hmong District of the Christian Missionary Alliance Church for three years, earning a certificate. He has served as the head of elders, as a council member, secretary, treasurer and chair of a church mission committee. He served one term as a member of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's Mission Council from 2014 to 2017.



• **NICK SCHURMAN** was licensed toward ordination on Jan. 21 at St. Catharines United Mennonite Church. He has worked there with youth and young adults since 2016. Prior to this, he worked with at-risk and street-involved youth in downtown Hamilton, Ont., supported adults with disabilities and served as a pastor of First Hmong Mennonite Church in Kitchener. He is a graduate of McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ont., and is currently in the master of theological studies program at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont. He lives with his wife Meghan and daughter Jubilee in Hamilton.



• **YARED SERETSE** was licensed toward ordination at Meheret Evangelical Church in Kitchener on Jan. 14. He has served the congregation for three years. Previously, he served a Full Gospel church in his home country of Ethiopia. It was there that he received undergraduate degrees in Bible and theology, and in sociology. He has also received a master of biblical studies degree by distance education from New Life Bible College in Virginia. He lives in Kitchener with his wife and two children.



• **MARV FRIESEN** began as interim supply pastor at both Community Mennonite Church in Stouffville and Rouge Valley Mennonite Church in Markham. His duties are to accompany both congregations as they work with other resources to clarify their directions for the future. One Sunday a month the congregations will meet together, while on the others Friesen will serve them separately. As they are significantly different congregations, he plans to mould his worship and sermons to the congregations' individual needs. He earned a bachelor of theology degree from CMU and a master of divinity degree from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Ind. He has served in Canada as an interim pastor in Petitcodiac, N.B.; and as pastor of Welcome Inn Church in Hamilton, Ont., Vineland (Ont.) United Mennonite Church twice (first as youth pastor, and later as lead pastor), and Carman (Man.) Mennonite Church.



• **RUDY BAERGEN** will begin a half-time supply interim position at Valley View Mennonite Church in London on March 1. He has previously pastored at Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church and Waterloo North Mennonite Church, both in Waterloo; Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg; and First Mennonite Church in Kitchener.



• **GARY KNARR** will begin as interim minister at Preston Mennonite Church on March 1. Previously, he has served as interim minister at Floradale (Ont.) Mennonite Church, Harrow (Ont.) Mennonite Church and Erb St. Mennonite Church in Waterloo; and before that he pastored at First Mennonite Church in Kitchener for 10 years. He has a doctorate in history from Queen's University in Kingston, Ont., a master of divinity degree from AMBS, and a bachelor's degree in history from Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo.



—BY DAVE ROGALSKY



*Matthew Bailey-Dick, left, the Anabaptist Learning Workshop coordinator, gives instructions to panel members Willie Taves, Vic Krahn and Josie Winterfeld.*

## The skill and soul of listening

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
ANCASTER, ONT.

Listening to God in worship, contemplatively in a labyrinth, or in the Bible. Listening to each other across cultures, when your hearing is impaired or when with the elderly.

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada pastors, chaplains and congregational leaders gathered for a daylong seminar on listening on Jan. 20 at Redeemer College.

The morning panel of three pastors focussed on “listening with a pastoral ear.”

Tanya Dyck Steinmann of East Zorra Mennonite Church near Tavistock spoke about listening as a spiritual posture more than a skill or strategy, as a muscle to train and then use, and as a posture of alertness. For her, listening means being aware of her head, her heart and her gut (her physical responses while with another person).

Roberson Mbayamvula of Hagerman Mennonite Church in Markham and a regional minister associate in the regional church, spoke of a Congolese proverb, noting that people have “two ears but only one mouth [so] listen and listen again.” “Listening is a form of love. We put aside our own agenda and give attention to the other,” he said, adding that listening is about “selflessness and humility.”

Jim Loepp Thiessen, interim minister at North Leamington United Mennonite Church, spoke more about listening in discernment. He tells a few people about a situation he is involved in, asking them to seek God’s guidance. No names and few details are given. The people are to listen for any prompting. From those situations, he said that many times they have given him advice he could bring to the situation that proved very helpful.

The afternoon panel focussed on “listening with a congregational ear,” during which non-pastoral leaders shared their thoughts and ideas.

Willie Taves of Faith Mennonite Church in Leamington noted that by classifying decision-making and listening to each other as a form of worship the congregation had successfully dealt with a number of difficult questions, including the Being a Faithful Church process and a question about whether to sponsor a Christian or a non-Christian Syrian family. Honest tensions and open conversation had characterized both processes, he said.

Vic Krahn of Erb Street Mennonite Church in Waterloo noted that voting is a form of listening, as is consensus

decision-making. He said the congregation sometimes votes on a matter, sometimes not; if no agreement seems to arise, then the question is left to a later time. “True listening does not know what the result will be,” he said.

Josie Winterfeld, the peace and justice and outreach worker at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church in Kitchener, spoke about listening to the Spirit of God in the Word of God, in the church or outside of it. In the last of these, she focussed on listening to Indigenous people through their stories in order to learn how God is calling the church to new ways of being in relationship with them.

Among the workshops offered, Timothy Li-Hui Tang’s on “intercultural listening” was full both times it was offered. Tang, the associate director of the Tyndale Intercultural Centre in Toronto, explained that intercultural learning moves from denial that there is difference; through polarization, where “my” and “our” way is right; to minimization, where difference is seen as unimportant; to acceptance, which comprehends difference; and finally to adaptation, which bridges across difference, knowing that sometimes one culture and group has ideas and solutions the other needs.

The event was part of the Anabaptist Learning Workshop, a joint program of Conrad Grebel University College and MC Eastern Canada. ☸

## /// Briefly noted

### Witness workers offer creative report on work in China

SASKATOON—Styled as “a visit to China,” a Jan. 28 event at Mount Royal Mennonite Church was probably as close as one could get to China without leaving Saskatoon. Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers George and Tobia Veith described life in the northern Chinese city of Harbin. The couple teach English at Harbin University and have also been invited to teach and lead worship as part of an English-language ministry at a local Christian church. Jeanette Hanson, also an MC Canada Witness worker and associate director of Mennonite Partners in China (MPC), depicted her organization’s efforts to support the church in China. One of the key pieces of that work right now, said Hanson, is translating Anabaptist theological materials into the Chinese language. Alongside these more formal presentations, participants got to try their hand at Chinese calligraphy, enjoy a Chinese tea ceremony, have a go at Chinese jump-rope, or take a virtual tour to China through Anita Bergen’s photos taken during a 2017 trip she and her husband, Cameron Nicolle, took under the auspices of MPC. The visit to China culminated in a shared meal at which Asian dishes and chopsticks offered another sensory layer to the experience.

—STORY AND PHOTO  
BY DONNA SCHULZ



*Garth Ewert Fisher, left, tries his hand at Chinese calligraphy with George Veith's tutelage.*

## /// Staff changes

### Pastoral transitions in Saskatchewan

• **BEN PAULS**, who has served Zoar Mennonite Church in Waldheim since August 2012, retired as of Dec. 31, 2017. For much of his career Pauls has been involved with music ministry but he has enjoyed his years in pastoral ministry. “It wasn’t my background, but was a growing, learning experience,” he says. Pauls and his wife Pat plan to move to Manitoba in 2018 to be closer to family.



• **LOIS SIEMENS** resigned as pastor of Superb Mennonite Church near Kerrobert, Sask., effective Dec. 31, 2017. Having served the congregation for 11 years on a half-time basis, Siemens will be moving to Saskatoon, where she hopes to find a full-time ministry position. She values her time with Superb Mennonite, which she describes as “a singing church.” She says, “I will miss singing with the congregation and the choir.”



• **RIC DRIEDIGER** has been interim pastor at Zoar Mennonite in Langham since January 2016. Recently the congregation invited him to serve a three-year term, for the winter months. Driediger, who owns Churchill River Canoe Outfitters, spends his summers in northern Saskatchewan. He feels the congregation is at a crossroad. The decision to go ahead with a new church building led to several members leaving the congregation. “If we keep coasting, this church won’t exist in five to eight years,” he says. He feels those who left “aren’t willing to work for the change we think needs to happen.” Driediger was licensed toward ordination on Nov. 26, 2017.



• **ED OLFERT** was hired by Grace Mennonite Church in Prince Albert as its half-time pastor on Nov. 1, 2017. Olfert is no stranger to the congregation, having served as pastor there for 11 years, from 1995 to 2006. Olfert has spent the intervening 11 years engaged in a variety of jobs, from driving truck and welding to operating heavy equipment. He says, “It feels good to be back. These people are my friends.”



—BY DONNA SCHULZ

## /// Staff change

### Pastoral transition in British Columbia

• **ADAM BACK**, the new co-pastor at First United Mennonite Church in Vancouver, was installed and licensed toward orientation on Jan. 7 by Garry Janzen, executive minister of Mennonite Church British Columbia. Back has a master of arts degree in theological studies from Regent College in Vancouver, with concentrations in both biblical studies and Christianity and the arts. He also holds bachelor’s and a master’s degrees in fine arts, and is an accomplished painter. While this is his first full-time pastoral position, he has experience in various pastoral settings, including the Dale House in Colorado Springs, a residential facility for at-risk male youth, and at Immanuel Church Vancouver, an Anglican congregation. Back joins Lydia Cruttwell in co-pastoring at First United Mennonite, working together to seek revitalization and re-visioning for Vancouver’s longest-running Mennonite congregation.



—BY AMY DUECKMAN

## GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

# Seeking reconciliation through jubilee

*Workshop offers new paradigm for healing Indigenous-settler relationships*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent  
ROSTHERN, SASK.

What does the ancient Levitical concept of jubilee have to do with reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and their settler neighbours? Plenty, according to Steve Heinrichs.

During Rosthern Mennonite Church's Deeper Life Days on Jan. 26 and 27, Heinrichs, who is director of Indigenous-settler relations for Mennonite Church Canada, presented a three-session workshop entitled "Unsettling discipleship: The cost of colonialism, the joy of jubilee."

Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its resulting Calls to Action have raised awareness of past and present injustice toward Indigenous peoples. The current paradigm for reconciliation is one of social equity through education, bridgebuilding and friendship, said Heinrichs, and while these things are important, they are not enough to heal the fractured relationship. What is needed, in addition to friendship, is land reparation.

Some participants confessed to feeling challenged by Heinrich's viewpoint. "[Land reparation] involves a giving up and we're not ready to do that," said Bernie Thiessen. "The other [view] involves educating ourselves." Delilah Roth captured the complexity of the issue when she said, "As farmers, we feel a responsibility to the land, to feed the world, but just to give the land

back is idealistic."

Land reparation may be the key to reconciliation, but talking about it is difficult. "I find this challenging myself," said Heinrichs. "It can be overwhelming and paralyzing."

Yet it is to land reparation "we need to go if we're serious about reconciliation," he said. "Reconciliation without land reparation lets the rest of society off the hook."

Indigenous political leader Art Manuel wrote: "It is the loss of our land that is the precise cause of our impoverishment. . . . The land issue must be addressed before reconciliation can begin."

The biblical model of jubilee offers a hopeful paradigm. In Leviticus 25, God commands the Israelites to set aside every 50th year as a year of jubilee during which the land will remain fallow, debts will be cancelled, slaves will be set free and land will be restored to its original owners.

The intent of jubilee is "not so everybody has the same," said Heinrichs, "but so everybody has enough." Jubilee, he added, "gives the disinherited a chance to start over."

Jesus' inaugural message in Luke 4 is most likely a reference to jubilee, according to Heinrichs, as is his Sermon on the Plain in Luke 6. But it is the tax collector Zacchaeus, in Luke 19, who perhaps best

embodies jubilee. As evidence of his changed heart, Zacchaeus promises to give half his possessions to the poor, and if he has defrauded anyone, to repay them four times as much.

Reconciliation through jubilee begins with prayer. Heinrichs cited theologian and activist Ched Myers, who says that "to pray is to learn to believe in a transformation of self and world."

Reconciliation through jubilee does not have to be difficult. It might include donating a portion of real estate sales toward land reparation funds. The Jubilee Fund, founded jointly by MC Canada and Mennonite Central Committee, is one such possibility.

It might include speaking out in solidarity with Indigenous people as they fight for their rights. In the Churches for Freedom Road campaign, a number of Winnipeg churches voiced support for the Shoal Lake 40 community's plea for a road to give residents access to safe drinking water.

It might also mean walking alongside Indigenous people as they lobby for legislative change. "Our white faces have more power on the steps of the legislature than native faces," said Heinrichs. "We need to leverage that."

As challenging as these actions may be, they are inherently joyful actions, he said,



*Steve Heinrichs, left, invites workshop participants to stand on an imaginary spectrum identifying their views on reconciliation, ranging from advocates for land reparation to those advocating education and friendship.*



*Steve Heinrichs, director of Indigenous-settler relations for Mennonite Church Canada, presents a workshop at Rosthern (Sask.) Mennonite Church entitled 'Unsettling discipleship: The cost of colonialism, the joy of jubilee.'*

suggesting that acknowledging and righting the wrongs of the past is liberating work for both Indigenous and settler peoples.

Again citing Art Manuel, Heinrichs said, "There's no down side to justice."

Indigenous people are ready to embrace the concept of jubilee. Rarihokwats, a Mohawk teacher, offers this re-envisioning of Leviticus 25 in a new book project that MC Canada's Indigenous-settler relations department is creating called *Unsettling the Word: Biblical Experiments in Decolonization*:

"The Earth is your Mother. Who would sell their Mother? Remember that you reside on these lands during your time as a visitor, a steward of the land and its gifts which are intended for your Seventh Generation. The land provides for the life of your children and you must provide for the redemption of the land. If one of your neighbours has necessities, you will invite her to your table. You will help her meet her needs. You will expect nothing in return." ❧

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## /// Briefly noted

### Hildegard's Bakery prepares to open doors

WINNIPEG—A new bakery focussed on ancient and whole grains and handmade practices is preparing to open its doors on the corner of Portage and Maryland. David Newsom, one of the owners of Hildegard's Bakery, says they are hoping to open in February. Newsom is partnering with his wife Judith (nee Friesen), and Michael Harms of Home Street Mennonite Church in the city, to bring a variety of healthy and delicious baked goods to Winnipeg's West End. Matt Veith, also of Home Street, is doing the bakery's design. Newsom and his partners will bake bread, pizza and desserts using local ingredients and a wood-fired brick oven. They will have an open kitchen to engage with their community of customers and teach them about how their food is produced. The bakery's name is a playful nod to Saint Hildegard of Bingen, a 12th-century mystic who not only wrote music and religious texts, but was also a strong advocate for the grain spelt. Newsom says Hildegard's involvement in the monastic movement also teaches them the importance of uniting prayer, work and community, and how their work can be an extension of their ministry as Christians.

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE



PHOTO BY MATT VEITH

*David and Judith Newsom in front of their bakery located at 100-686 Portage Avenue in Winnipeg.*

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## ARTBEAT

## PHOTO ESSAY

# Seeking reconciliation through multicultural art

STORY BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

PHOTOS BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE AND RAY DIRKS

Manitoba Correspondent  
WINNIPEG

**A**round 200 people gathered at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery on Jan. 26 to celebrate the opening of Reconciliation Through the Arts, an exhibition of Indigenous and settler art that explores the history and present reality of colonization in Canada and different visions of reconciliation.

Clairissa Kelly, coordinator of the Peguis Post-Secondary Transition Program at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), and Marlene Gallagher, a sessional lecturer and member of the Speakers Bureau for the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba, organized the exhibition. After they took students to the Stories in Art From Iraqi Kurdistan exhibit at the gallery in 2016 and connected with the themes of oppression they saw there, they were inspired to display the stories of Indigenous artists.

Kelly and Gallagher gathered artwork from both Indigenous and settler artists along with collaborations between the two.

“It is our hope that the exhibit will



Art by Ojibwe artist Trip Charbs.

generate intercultural dialogue with Indigenous and settler communities,” say Kelly and Gallagher.

Students of the Peguis program, CMU students, faculty and staff, residential school survivors, and Kelly and Gallagher themselves are just a few of the artists that make up the vast array of contributors to the exhibition.

The exhibition’s opening event consisted of addresses from gallery curator Ray Dirks, Kelly, Gallagher, and Peter Friesen, a Mennonite settler involved in helping organize the exhibit. Chloe Mallett, Kelly’s daughter, danced while musician Ray “Coco” Stevenson played the drum and sang. Rosanna Deerchild of CBC Radio One’s *Unreserved* program performed spoken word from her book of poetry, *Calling Down the Sky*. Kelly closed the program by presenting roses to all the artists present at the opening, and passing out tobacco ties to the large crowd, encouraging people to pass on the ties to those who share their stories with them.

Reconciliation Through the Arts runs until March 10. ☞

For more photos, visit [canadianmennonite-reconciliation-art](http://canadianmennonite-reconciliation-art).



PHOTO BY RAY DIRKS

Clairissa Kelly’s daughter, Chloe Mallett, dances for a large audience at the exhibition’s opening event.



Rosanna Deerchild, host of CBC Radio One’s *Unreserved*, reads a poem from her book *Calling Down the Sky*. The book tells the story of residential schools in Canada and her own mother’s experiences and struggles as a generational survivor.



PHOTO BY RAY DIRKS

*Co-organizer Clairissa Kelly smudges the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery in preparation for the exhibition's opening event.*



*Art by Ovide Charlette of the Opaskwayak First Nation.*



*A dream catcher by exhibition co-organizer Marlene Gallagher.*



*Jochebed Giesbrecht, Laura Carr-Pries and Allegra Friesen Epp stand around Tracy Fehr's installation of clay bowls. Fehr encourages visitors to take a bowl in honour of an important woman in their life and leave a note about the woman in its place.*



*Bryn Friesen Epp of Home Street Mennonite Church in Winnipeg adds a leaf to a collaboratively decorated tree. Each leaf contains a gallery visitor's hope for reconciliation and commitments to taking part in it.*

## BOOK REVIEW

# Women's groups changed focus since 1970s

*Circles of Sisterhood:*

*A History of Mission, Service and Fellowship in Mennonite Women's Organizations.*

Anita Hooley Yoder. Herald Press, 2017, 315 pages.

REVIEWED BY BARB DRAPER

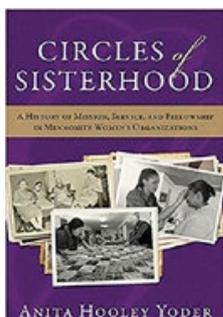
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

The golden age of Mennonite women's organizations in Canada and the United States came in the years between 1940 and 1970, writes Anita Hooley Yoder in *Circles of Sisterhood*. In both the Mennonite Church and the General Conference Mennonite Church, women were highly involved, getting together to work at sewing projects on a monthly basis. Many congregations had several groups arranged by age, including girls.

The motivation for all this activity was mission and service, but fellowship was always an important factor. Like in other denominations, Mennonite women first organized to support missionaries overseas and to help the poor in North American cities, but as needs increased during the Second World War, they ramped up their output. When relief sales were organized, it was the women's groups that provided many of the donated items and a significant part of the labour.

The earliest recorded Mennonite women's sewing circle in Canada began meeting in Gretna, Man., sometime before 1900, but it was many years before Manitoba had a provincial organization. The (Old) Mennonite Church congregations in Ontario were slower to get started, but sewing circles expanded rapidly in 1917, when a women's missionary society was organized within the denomination.

The number of women's groups declined through the late 1960s and '70s. Sewing remained important for some



groups, but others began to emphasize Bible study and women's spirituality. Women's retreats became popular activities, and the broader organizations began to support women studying theology.

Mennonite Women Canada became an organization separate from the U.S. in 2000. While sewing—mostly quilts and

comforters—continues today, the church-wide women's organization tends to put its focus on spiritual growth and fellowship.

While Hooley Yoder does give an overview of all the work done by women, she devotes most of the book to descriptions of the changing role of women. In the early years, some groups had to have a man open their meetings with prayer, but over time women developed leadership skills that they came to use in other church settings. The author writes from a feminist perspective, describing in detail the occasions when male church leaders seemed to disrespect the work of women.

As a person who sews, I wish the book had more detail about the amazing amount of material aid that must have been provided by Mennonite women's groups over the years. The author tends to gloss over the clothing that was sewn and mended, the quilts and blankets made, the meals catered and the many other ways women carried on the work of the church. She gives extensive coverage to the process of women acquiring recognized leadership positions in the church, but her tone towards those who continue to get together to sew is almost condescending.

## Staff change

### MennoMedia appoints new executive director, publisher

• AMY GINGERICH has been named the new executive director and publisher of MennoMedia and its book imprint Herald Press, effective early 2018. She has served as editor of Herald Press books and as editorial director of MennoMedia since 2009.



Under her leadership, Herald Press has targeted its book publishing in two veins: one that helps describe Amish and Mennonites to tourist markets, and one that helps Christians unpack implicit Anabaptist values such as community and discipleship. Recent bestselling Herald Press titles she has acquired include the *Mennonite Girls Can Cook* series, *Anabaptist Essentials: Ten Signs of a Unique Christian Faith*, *Trouble I've Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism* and *Very Married: Field Notes on Love and Fidelity*. Her work also involves oversight of Sunday school curricula, periodicals and the forthcoming Mennonite hymnal to be released in 2020. Prior to her work as editorial director, Gingerich was managing editor of the Gather 'Round Sunday school curriculum co-published by Mennonite Publishing Network and Brethren Press. MennoMedia is an agency of Mennonite Church U.S.A. and MC Canada, publishing church and Sunday school curricula, hymnals, periodicals, religious trade books under the Herald Press imprint, and the Third Way website. Gingerich's appointment has already been approved by the two national church boards.

—MennoMedia

The book ends with an honest reflection on the future of Mennonite women's groups. Hooley Yoder is not confident that they will continue but recognizes that they are striving to be relevant for the women of today. ❧

ABNER MARTIN MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP  
COMMITTEE PHOTO

*Emily Rempel of New Hamburg, Ont., is the recipient of the \$4,000 Abner Martin Music Scholarship for 2017-18. A member of East Zorra Mennonite Church near Tavistock, Ont., she has participated in the music activities there; she was also the choir director at Ontario Mennonite Music Camp in 2017. A graduate of Eastwood Collegiate Institute, Kitchener, she is in the third year of a music program at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, where she is studying music with a concentration in collaborative piano performance and music ministry. The Abner Martin Music Scholarship is awarded annually to a deserving student who is affiliated with a congregation in Mennonite Church Eastern Canada and is a full-time student in a graduate or undergraduate music program. The next application deadline is Sept. 15, 2018.*



# Art beat Snapshots



PHOTO BY GRANT KLASSEN

*On Jan. 7, Home Street Mennonite Church in Winnipeg dedicated two pieces of Indigenous art that had been given to the congregation. A group in the congregation meets to discuss and act upon healing of Indigenous-settler relationships, including consideration of the recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to Christian churches. The art is hanging in the church foyer with a plaque that reads: 'This church is located on Treaty 1 territory, traditional land of the Anishinaabe, Cree and Dakota people and the homeland of the Métis Nation. We are grateful to the Indigenous peoples for their stewardship of this land and the hospitality which enables our congregation to live, worship and serve God the Creator here. We acknowledge the harms that we in the settler community have brought upon the Indigenous peoples of this land. These pieces of art symbolize our commitment to be people of reconciliation in word and deed.' Pictured from left to right: Judith Rempel Smucker, Denise Pauls, David Neufeld and Esther Epp-Tiessen.*

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**Singer-songwriter leads ‘Reading the Bible with Jesus’ workshops**

Bryan Moyer Suderman invites participants to consider what they can learn from Jesus’ use of Scripture.  
[canadianmennonite.org/scripture-Jesus](http://canadianmennonite.org/scripture-Jesus)



**Argentine Mennonites celebrate one hundred years**

With drama and a focus on mission, Mennonites in Argentina celebrated one hundred years of Mennonite witness in the country.  
[canadianmennonite.org/argentina-100](http://canadianmennonite.org/argentina-100)



**From hand to hand to hand**

MCC’s Julie Bell tells the story of how eight medical kits found their way to a small clinic near Pyongyang, North Korea.  
[canadianmennonite.org/medical-kits-korea](http://canadianmennonite.org/medical-kits-korea)



**‘The level of mechanization was amazing to witness’**

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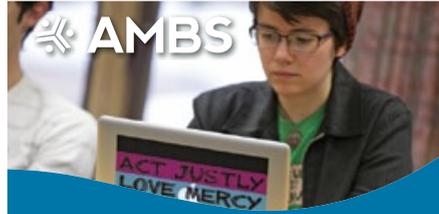
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**Schools Directory featuring Winnipeg Mennonite Elementary & Middle Schools**

# Student heroes join the club

## WMEMS, Winnipeg

When Wes Krahn, the Grade 4 teacher at Winnipeg Mennonite Elementary & Middle Schools (WMEMS), goes for his lunch break, he could also be preparing his super powers.

Super Hero Club is just one of the clubs Krahn helps run at the WMEMS Katherine Friesen Campus. The Super Hero Club is for students interested in role-playing that focusses on nonviolent conflict resolution scenarios using super powers like speed or invisibility in positive ways.

“The Super Hero Club keeps with the pacifist beliefs held by Mennonites and our school,” says Krahn, adding, “Focus is placed on talking through tense situations and helping one another where we are weakest... plus, super powers are pretty cool. Ever try lighting a candle with a poorly aimed fireball?”

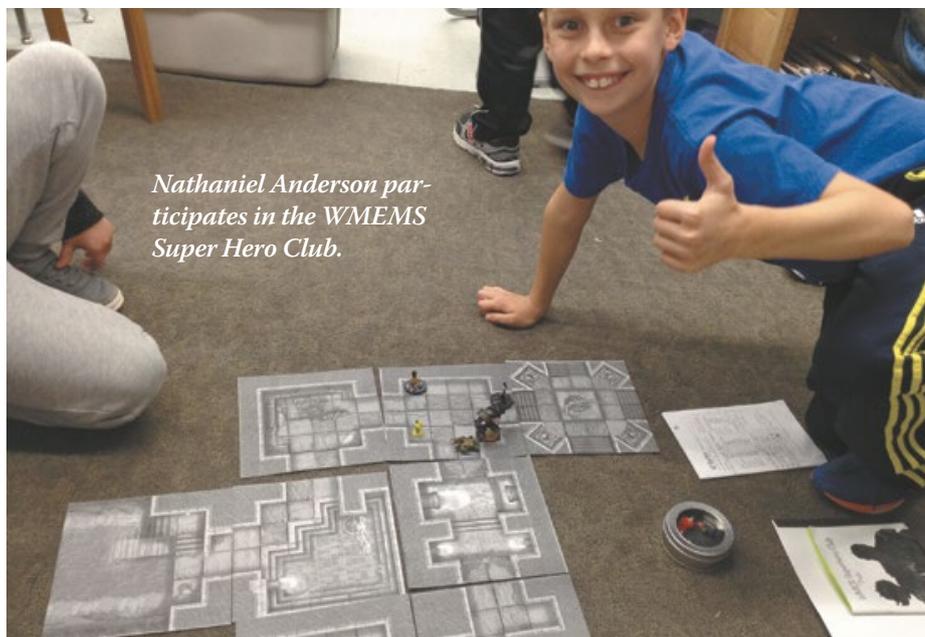
The WMEMS Super Hero Club is one of

many clubs geared toward specific student interests, such as the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Club, Gardening Club, Reading Club and Math Club.

“We are proud of every student who has joined our clubs,” says principal John Sawatzky, adding, “We have many popular clubs. We’ve even had students in our Math Club participate in online competitions and place very well worldwide. For that club, the focus is on enrichment and challenge in the area of math, and because of the online nature, students can work on practice questions at home.”

Not all clubs have a competitive aspect to them. Members of the Gardening Club seed and nurture plants each spring.

Nurturing WMEMS students’ areas of interest can help them develop to their fullest potential in the path they’d like to follow.



*Nathaniel Anderson participates in the WMEMS Super Hero Club.*

GOD AT WORK IN US

## OBITUARY

# Filmmaker dedicated to telling the Mennonite story

Otto Klassen  
April 7, 1927 – Jan. 17, 2018

BY BARB DRAPER  
Editorial Assistant

Otto Klassen dedicated many years of his life to making documentaries that tell Mennonite stories. A self-taught filmmaker, he produced a total of 84 films in his lifetime, most of them full documentaries. This is quite an achievement, since he made his living as a bricklayer and regarded filmmaking as a hobby. He received an honorary doctorate from the University of Winnipeg on Oct. 21, 2007, in recognition of his work.

Born in Ukraine when it was part of the former Soviet Union, he experienced many challenges in his younger years, including terror under the Stalin regime, the horror of the Second World War and the hardships of pioneering in Paraguay. While many around him perished during those years, he survived and believed it was his responsibility to tell the story of how Mennonites persevered in spite of suffering, and how their faith sustained them.

As a teenager during the war, he gained some experience in working with photographic equipment when he was assigned to assist a German photographer documenting the war. Although he was haunted by some of the images he saw through the lens of a camera, he also developed a passion for photography. He was intrigued by the war documentaries being put together by German film crews, and he came to recognize the power of story told through motion pictures.

When the war ended, he took the risk of returning to the Soviet-occupied zone of Germany to rejoin his family. In 1947, they were able to immigrate to Paraguay, where he met and married Kaethe Bergen in

1949. They immigrated to Canada with two young children in 1955 and settled in Winnipeg, attending Springfield Heights Mennonite Church.

Klassen developed his own masonry business but soon was known for his photography and subsequently his films. He closely analyzed documentaries, including those made by Disney, and visited famous professional studios to develop his skills.

In the 1970s, he produced a six-part series in the German language that told the story of the Mennonites in Paraguay. Another early major work, released in 1985, was *The Great Trek*, a two-part documentary about

the Mennonite experience in Russia during the Second World War. Part of what makes this film so powerful is that Klassen persisted until he was given permission to use footage from the official German archives. Also impressive is the fact that he wrote the scripts and self-funded these projects. Known for careful work and historical accuracy, he worked in several languages, including English, High German, Low German and Spanish.

Other films by Klassen include documentaries about Mennonites in Manitoba and in Mexico. More recent projects were *Remembering Russia 1914-1927*, *Escape Via Moscow 1929* and *Women's Burden Under Stalin*, each 45 minutes in length.

The story of his life, *I Remember: The Story of Otto Klassen*, was translated into English and published in 2013. It is available at the CommonWord Bookstore and Resource Centre at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg. Klassen donated his Mennonite films to the Mennonite Heritage Archives, and DVD copies of some of them are available there.

Klassen is survived by his five children: Irmgard (George), Otto, George (Betty), Anne-Marie (Frank) and Charlotte (Rick). He was predeceased by his wife Kaethe in 2003. ❧



PHOTO COURTESY OF KEN REDDIG

*Using pre-digital equipment, Otto Klassen works on one of his more than 50 films that document the lives of Mennonites.*

# An openness to learning is the first step

Scholar Kim Penner talks about Christian ethics, the Mennonite church and sexual abuse

BY AARON EPP  
Young Voices Editor

Kim Penner graduated last November with a PhD in theology from the University of St. Michael's College in Toronto. Canadian Mennonite called Penner at her home in Waterloo, Ont., to ask her about her dissertation, "Discipleship as erotic peacemaking: Toward a feminist Mennonite theo-ethics of embodiment and sexuality," and what her work has to offer the Mennonite church. The interview has been edited and condensed for reasons of space.

**CM:** What is your PhD dissertation about?

**KP:** My dissertation is about the methods, sources and norms that Mennonites use to do Christian ethics. I bring in a critical feminist perspective that looks for how relationships of power are operating in all of those circumstances. In particular, I was interested in looking at sexuality and embodiment as the context for doing Christian ethics. What I end up proposing is a particular type of sexual ethics that I call "erotic peacemaking," which is both, I think, faithful to a Mennonite approach to doing ethics and committed to the well-being of the most vulnerable members [women, LGBTQ persons, people with disabilities, people of colour] of a community of faith. To me, that's a big part of what makes it feminist.

**CM:** What inspired this research?

**KP:** I grew up with many positive experiences of what it means to be Mennonite and how to be a disciple of Jesus within the community of faith, but I also experienced some things that didn't seem to match what I thought the church was supposed to be committed to. For example, I thought that if I was part of a church that is committed to peace and nonviolence, that we

should be talking about those things with regards to gender and sexuality. I didn't hear that happening, and, in fact, I heard those conversations being shut down or not taking seriously the experiences of the people who were being affected the most, which would have been women and LGBTQ persons. The failure of Mennonite peace theology and ethics to address human sexuality and gender-based violence was also a key [inspiration].

**CM:** What do you want people to learn from your work?

**KP:** Power exists in all of our relationships, including among Mennonites. Mennonites are not exempt from relationships of privilege and disadvantage. As much as we would like to be a community of equals, and we should strive for that, we need to acknowledge the fact that we are not presently equal, at least in our social context and relationships. We need to start our conversation and our ethics by talking about power and privileging the voices and experiences of those with the least amount of privilege or power in a given conversation. That means listening to those experiences in community, and in relationship  
(Continued on page 28)



PHOTO COURTESY OF KIM PENNER

Kim Penner holds a PhD in theology from the University of St. Michael's College in Toronto.



PHOTO COURTESY OF KIM PENNER

Kim Penner, left, with Marilyn Legge, her PhD advisor, at Penner's graduation last November.



PHOTO BY MATTHEW SAWATZKY

An ally holds a sign at the Winnipeg Women's March last month. 'We need to acknowledge the fact that we are not presently equal,' Kim Penner says.



PHOTO BY MATTHEW SAWATZKY

*Participants make their way along Main Street as part of the Winnipeg Women's March. 'There is clearly a lot to learn right now, and it's really being open to learning that is the first step,' Kim Penner says.*

*(Continued from page 27)*

with Scripture, to see how the Holy Spirit might be working there. I also would love people to take away an understanding of sexuality as good and intrinsic to our human experience, and that God shows how good our sexuality is in part by the fact that God became flesh and human in Jesus. To be human is to be a sexual person, so that is an affirmation of our sexuality, if we understand sexuality as—broadly speaking—our need for intimate relationships.

**CM:** *Your dissertation explores in part Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder's methodical perpetration of sexual violence against upwards of 100 women. The #MeToo movement has demonstrated just how prevalent sexual assault and harassment is in society. What can Canadian Mennonites learn from this, and how might we respond?*

**KP:** There is clearly a lot to learn right now, and it's really being open to learning that is the first step. What Canadian Mennonites can learn from [the case of] John Howard Yoder is that we need to examine our theology in order to see if there are particular ways that our beliefs about God, or how we interpret Scripture, could potentially perpetuate violence or sexual abuse. On a practical level, an

immediate thing we can do is learn about the importance of believing victims. John Howard Yoder's victims were not believed, and there are many reasons for this, but some of it had to do with, I think, an emphasis on the Mennonite community as a place where this violence doesn't happen. We know now that it does happen among Mennonites. Of course, wanting to prevent abuse from happening means looking at abuse of power and creating better systems of accountability in our churches and in the academy as well.

**CM:** *What do you have to say to young Canadian Mennonites—I'm thinking people between the ages of 16 and 25—about the #MeToo movement?*

**KP:** Be encouraged by this example of bravery, and the support that the movement has received. Change is possible. Sometimes change happens outside of the church first before it happens inside the church. The #MeToo movement can be inspirational for young Canadian Mennonites to motivate them to work for change within their own congregations, to promote listening to the experiences of survivors of abuse, and also to work to prevent sexual abuse from happening in the first place. ☺

## Unfiltered Falk

*Comedian Matt Falk talks about his new DVD and sharing his faith from the stage*

**BY AARON EPP**  
Young Voices Editor

**F**or most comedians, delivering unfiltered material means cursing a blue streak. For Matt Falk, it means something else entirely.

"Stop looking at yourself in the bathroom mirror trying to find the thing that makes you beautiful, 'cause you're not gonna find it, okay?" the rotund comic tells the audience during a bit about body image on his new DVD, *Generational Gaps*. "The thing that makes you beautiful is a lot deeper than that. You were made in the

image of God! . . . Your spirit—that's what makes you beautiful."

Being that explicit about his faith during the performance, Falk says, "was deliberate and, in a sense, it was not deliberate." The bit evolved over the months he spent preparing the material in the lead-up to filming the performance that's on the DVD. At first, it included hedged language that made no mention of God. But as he continued to work on the material, he got it to a point where he could say what was really



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MATT FALK

*Comedian Matt Falk's first-ever DVD, Generational Gaps, is in stores on Feb.*

on his heart.

"I had to make the decision not to filter myself," the 28-year old says during a phone interview from his home in Niverville, Man. "For a lot of comedians, being uncensored means saying things a little dirtier, but for me, being unfiltered [and] being uncensored is sharing what's deep in my spirit."

Filmed in May 2015 at the Garrick Centre in Winnipeg, *Generational Gaps* captures 70 minutes of material that Falk developed after the release of his first album, 2012's *Apple Pie & Scars*. It's the visual companion to the *Generational Gaps* album that came out this past June. Crown Entertainment will release the DVD across Canada and the United States on Feb. 14.

"It feels amazing," he says of the DVD's imminent release. A fan recently told him that he listens to the *Generational Gaps* album every day, and he has been eagerly anticipating the release of the DVD because it will allow him to see the things that people are laughing at when there's a pause on the album, presumably because Falk is making a funny face or miming an amusing action.

"That, as a comedy nerd, blows me away, because I distinctly remember growing up listening to Robin Williams's CDs, hearing laughs where there's no dialogue and thinking, 'What's he doing there?'" Falk says. "The fact that people are doing that with my work is really cool."

The release of *Generational Gaps* on DVD is just the latest in a long list of things Falk has accomplished since he began performing stand-up in his late teens. In 2010, he placed second out of 285 contestants in the World Series of Comedy in Las Vegas. Since then, he's performed across North America with the likes of Gilbert Gottfried, Dave Coulier and Andy Dick—all while maintaining an act that is 100 percent clean, meaning it is free of vulgar material.

In 2017, he continued to perform across North America, including appearances at the Winnipeg and Halifax comedy festival. Those sets were filmed and CBC will broadcast them later this year.

In his personal life, Falk and his wife Sabrina saw a years-long dream come true when they adopted a child from South Africa who officially joined their family just before Christmas.

"It's been remarkable. He's by far the best thing that's happened to us," Falk says, adding without missing a beat, "apart from our salvation, and you always have to say that . . . because if you don't say that, God overhears and he gets upset."

The nature of the comedy business is such that comedians typically have a lot of things in the works, but the majority of them don't come to fruition. As such, Falk is reticent to name his future plans.

One sure thing, aside from the DVD release, is that he has performances coming up in B.C. and Manitoba this month. The act features new material that he has developed since filming *Generational Gaps*, and people who go to see him perform can expect to hear more of his unfiltered views on faith.

"Right now I have a bit in my act that talks about my baptism," he says. "Some people get uncomfortable when I talk about it, some don't. But this is a part of my life, this is something that's happened to me, that I've found humour in and I want to share it."

"I'm not perfect by any stretch of the imagination," he adds, "but I'm becoming less filtered as the years go on." ❧

To learn more, visit [mattfalkcomedy.com](http://mattfalkcomedy.com).



*'It feels amazing,' Matt Falk says of the upcoming release of *Generational Gaps* on DVD.*



*The *Generational Gaps* DVD features 70 minutes of material Matt Falk developed after the release of his first album, *Apple Pie & Scars*.*



*Matt Falk has performed across North America with veteran comics like Gilbert Gottfried and Dave Coulier.*

## Calendar

### British Columbia

**Until March 2:** Paintings by Neil Peter Dyck on display at the Mennonite Heritage Museum Gallery, Abbotsford.

**March 1,2,23:** "Living the gospel" fundraising banquets for MCC B.C.: (1) North Langley Community Church, Langley; (2) Willingdon Church, Vancouver; (23) Northview Community Church, Abbotsford; all events begin at 6:30 p.m.

**March 10,11:** Advent Vespers with the Abendmusik Choir: (10) Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford; (11) St. Philip's Anglican Church, Vancouver; both services at 7:30 p.m. Offering in support of the Menno Simons Centre.

**April 14:** Reading the Bible conference, location and time to be announced.

**May 5:** Women's Inspirational Day, location and time to be announced.

### Alberta

**June 1-2:** MCC Alberta charity auction and sale, in Didsbury. For more information, visit [mccreliefsale.com](http://mccreliefsale.com).

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

### Saskatchewan

**March 9-10:** MC Saskatchewan annual delegate sessions, at Zion Mennonite Church, Swift Current, cohosted by Emmaus Mennonite Church.

### Manitoba

**Until March 10:** Art and Reconciliation exhibit at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg featuring works by Indigenous artists and a collaborative quilt by CMU students.

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

**March 2-4:** MC Manitoba Junior Youth winter retreat at Camp Assiniboia.

**March 4:** Pax Cantata Chorus presents Handel's "Coronation Anthem No. 4" and more, at Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

**March 9:** CMU campus visit day. For more information, visit [cmu.ca/campusvisit](http://cmu.ca/campusvisit).

**March 11:** Mennonite Community Orchestra presents its spring concert, featuring Strauss's "Die Fledermaus Overture," Mozart's "Piano Concerto No. 25," and Dvorak's "Symphony No. 8," in CMU's chapel, Winnipeg, at 3 p.m.

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

**March 16:** Opening of exhibits by Anthony Chiarella and Faye Hall at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit [gallery.mennonitechurch.ca](http://gallery.mennonitechurch.ca).

**March 16-18:** MC Manitoba senior youth retreat at Camp Assiniboia.

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

**March 25:** Bells and Whistles with Strings Attached, featuring CMU's handbell ensemble and guitar ensemble, in CMU's Laudamus Auditorium, at 7 p.m.

**March 27:** CMU open house. For more information, visit [cmu.ca/openhouse](http://cmu.ca/openhouse).

**March 30:** The Winnipeg First Mennonite Church Choir, with orchestra under the direction of Yuri Klaz, presents Mendelssohn's "Lobgesang" on Good Friday at 7 p.m. at the church.

**April 4:** CMU Jazz and Concert Band perform, in the CMU Chapel, at 7 p.m.

**April 21:** CMU spring choral concert, in the Loewen Athletic Centre, at 7 p.m.

**May 11:** Opening of an exhibit by Gabriella Aguero at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit [gallery.mennonitechurch.ca](http://gallery.mennonitechurch.ca).

**May 14:** Westgate Mennonite Collegiate bursary banquet, at the Canad Inns Polo Park, Winnipeg. For more information, visit [westgatemennonite.ca](http://westgatemennonite.ca).

### Ontario

**Until April 13:** Conrad Grebel University College's Peace and

Conflict Studies program celebrates its 40th anniversary with Beyond Essays: Approaching Peace Education Differently, an exhibit of art-based PACS assignments completed by students over the past decade.

**Until May 2019:** Sites of Nonresistance: Ontario Mennonites and the First World War exhibit of letters, photographs and documents from the Mennonite Archives of Ontario, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo.

**Feb. 19:** Family Day open house at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg. Activities include sledding, skating, crafts, games and a campfire. RSVP required to 519-625-8602 or [info@hiddenacres.ca](mailto:info@hiddenacres.ca).

**Feb. 22:** Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, hosts a pizza dinner and information session for Grade 10 students and their parents.

**Feb. 25:** Menno Singers presents "Midwinter Hymn Sing," at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Kitchener, at 7 p.m. For more information, visit [mennosingers.com](http://mennosingers.com).

**March 1-2:** Conrad Grebel University

College present the Bechtel Lecture in Anabaptist-Mennonite Studies, at the College, at 7:30 p.m. each evening: (1) One Generation Away: Martyrs Mirror and the Survival of Anabaptist Christianity, by David Weaver-Zercher; (2) Mennonites and the Media: Telling Mennonite Stories Today, a panel discussion with David Weaver-Zercher, Sherri Klassen, Katie Steckly, Sam Steiner and Johnny Wideman.

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

**March 10:** Naomi's Colouring Recital, in support of Mennonite Central Committee Ontario; at the Hamilton Association for Residential and Recreational Redevelopment Programs, Hamilton, from 9 a.m. to noon.

**March 12:** Grandparent/grandchild day, at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg, features playing, singing, laughing and worshipping together; with The Ripple Effect Education's Alexa and Becki exploring ways to work for peace in everyday life.

For more information, email info

## OnGoing

### Neil Peter Dyck exhibition on until March 2

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.— Three Second Peaks, an art exhibit by Neil Peter Dyck of Vancouver, opened at the Mennonite Heritage Museum in Abbotsford with an artist's reception on Jan. 26. Dyck, who was born in Winnipeg and grew up in Abbotsford, has exhibited across Canada, including at the Toronto International Art Fair. His detailed paintings depict scenes from the vast Canadian Prairies to the rocky peaks of British Columbia's West Coast. His creative process includes using layers of tape and paint on wood panels. This is the first of several art exhibits by Mennonite artists planned for 2018 at the Mennonite Heritage Museum. Dyck's exhibit is on display until March 2.

—STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN



Visitors view the paintings of Neil Peter Dyck at the opening of Dyck's exhibit, *Three Second Peaks*, at Abbotsford's Mennonite Heritage Museum on Jan. 26.

@hiddenacres.ca.

**March 17:** Elmira meat canning fundraising breakfast, at Calvary United Church, St. Jacobs. Speaker: Stefanie Heide, a 2016-17 MCC Service and Learning Together worker who served in Cambodia. For tickets, call 519-745-8458.

**March 25:** Menno Singers presents "Come Light and Life Eternal," at the Church of St. John the Evangelist, Kitchener, at 3 p.m. For more information, visit mennosingers.com.

**April 28:** Pax Christi Chorale presents "Die Schopfung" by Haydn, at Grace

Church-on-the-Hill, Toronto, at 7:30 p.m.

**April 30 or May 1:** Spring seniors retreat, at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg.

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



/// Classifieds

**Employment Opportunities**



**Employment Opportunity**  
**FULL TIME ACCOUNTANT**

MCC Community Enterprises Inc. (MCC CE) is seeking a full time accountant to join their team. MCC CE is a wholly owned subsidiary of Mennonite Central Committee, British Columbia. MCC CE operates various businesses with a mandate to provide employment, training and work experience to job seekers and support the global and local charitable mission of Mennonite Central Committee.

**Requirements**

- CPA designation
- Experience with computer based accounting systems
- 3–5 years full cycle accounting experience
- Knowledge of for-profit and not-for-profit accounting and taxation
- Business and Public Practice experience

**Summary of Duties**

- Generate monthly financial statements/reports (i.e. income statement, balance sheet, cash flow)
- Oversee accounts payable and receivable and ensure both are up to date, as well as supervise accounting assistant
- Oversee payroll administration and supervise payroll officer
- Create annual budget(s) and medium to long term business planning—Facilitate annual review/audit done by external auditing firm
- Ensure CRA and other relevant legal compliance
- Ensure adequate insurance coverage

**Compensation**

A competitive compensation package is available

For more information email [rvanwyk@mccce.ca](mailto:rvanwyk@mccce.ca) or phone 778-856-2091

To apply, please submit cover letter and resume to [rvanwyk@mccce.ca](mailto:rvanwyk@mccce.ca) with subject line: **Application - Director of Finance.**

Position will remain open until filled.



**Employment opportunity**  
**Lead Pastor**

Niagara United Mennonite Church in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., is inviting applications for a FULL-TIME LEAD PASTOR. Start time is early 2018.

We are a congregation with approximately 200 in attendance for worship and seek a pastor to lead in growing people as intentional followers of Jesus and missional servants to our community. The pastor we seek will be committed to Anabaptist theology with strengths in leadership, evangelism through community engagement, preaching, teaching and pastoral care.

Inquires, resumes and letters of interest will be received until the end of September 2017, and may be directed to: [pastoraltransitions@mcec.ca](mailto:pastoraltransitions@mcec.ca)

To view the Pastoral Profile, visit <https://mcec.ca/jobs/lead-minister>.

## LEAMINGTON MENNONITE HOME

**The Leamington Mennonite Home & Apartments, a multilevel Community of Care to 320 seniors and frail elderly, is inviting applications for the position of Administrator.**



This leader, facilitator and project planner should possess:

- A graduate degree in social sciences, healthcare administration, nursing or related discipline
- 8-10 years senior management experience
- Exceptional oral and written communication skills
- Excellent report-writing skills with an ability to summarize and outline
- Community-development capabilities, including work with a volunteer Board of Directors representing area Mennonite churches
- Experience in leading a large workplace consisting of union, non-union and contract staff
- A passion for promoting and leading seniors care, services and accommodations in a faithbased setting

**Start Date: Spring–Summer, 2018. To be negotiated.**

The position includes a comprehensive compensation package, including an excellent pension.

**Interested applicants should submit their resume to Henry Hildebrandt at [LMHBoardofDirectors@gmail.com](mailto:LMHBoardofDirectors@gmail.com) by April 6, 2018.**

**For Sale**

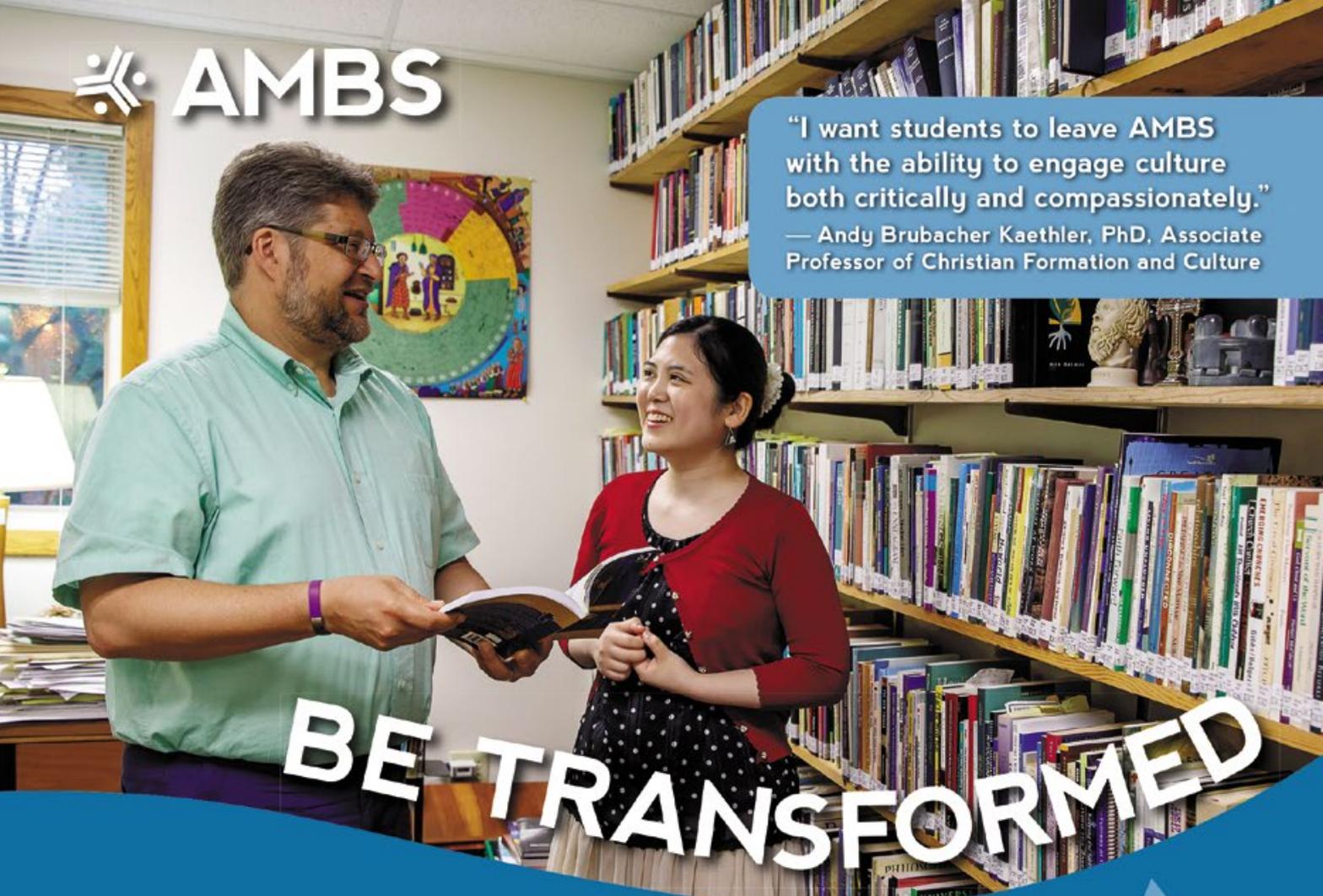
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