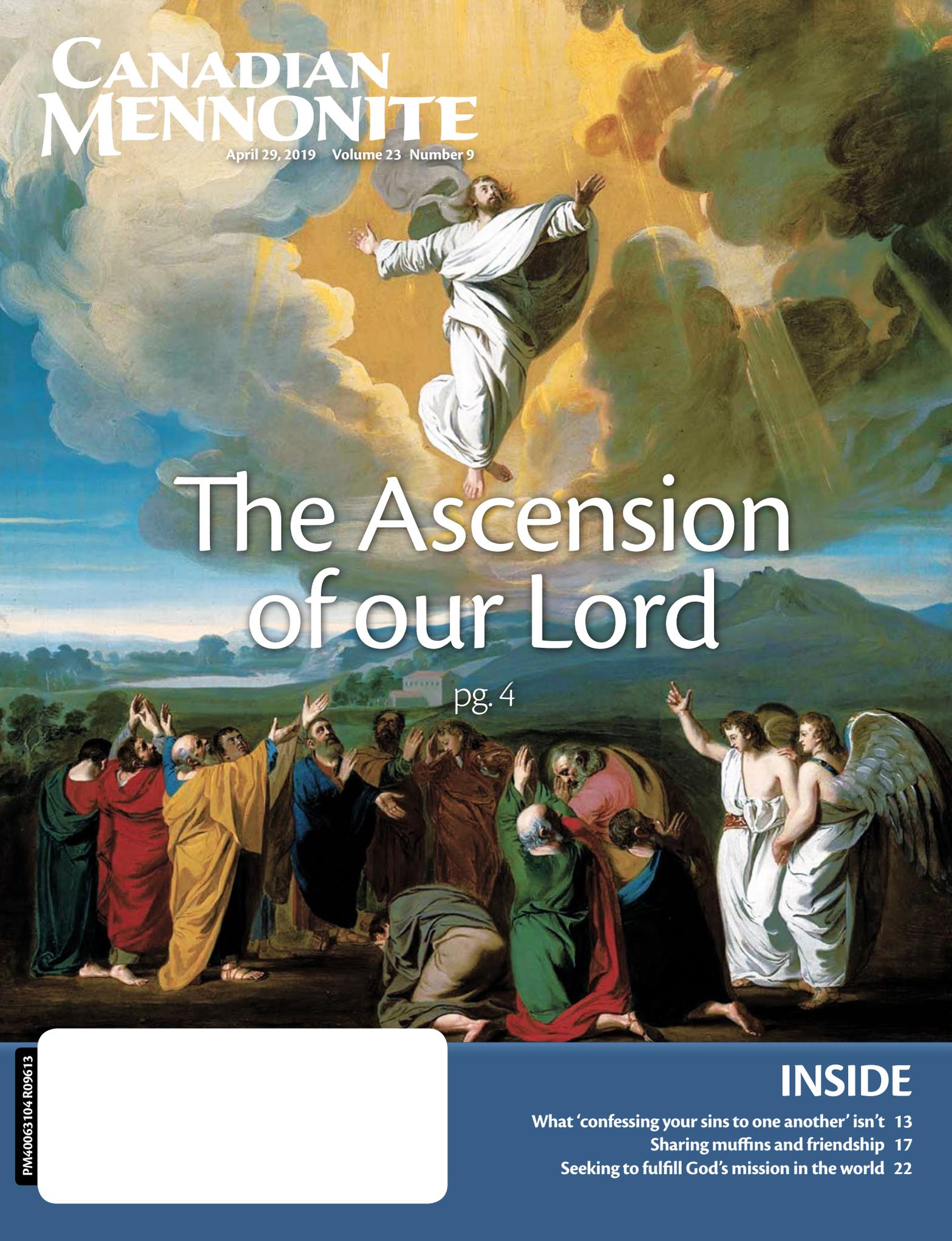


CANADIAN MENNONITE

April 29, 2019 Volume 23 Number 9



The Ascension of our Lord

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EDITORIAL

Costly perfume

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER
EXECUTIVE EDITOR



On April 15, dramatic images of Paris's burning Notre Dame Cathedral captured worldwide attention.

Nearby, local citizens and tourists stood singing and praying in grief. Could it be that this majestic symbol of faith, art and culture was crumbling before our eyes?

Within 48 hours, over one billion euros had been donated towards its restoration. Three wealthy French donors pledged large amounts, along with financial commitments from national and international corporations, from the French government, and from many ordinary citizens. In the days that followed, donations have continued to pour in.

Soon the social media feeds were lighting up with responses—many people were supportive of the fundraising, but many other posts suggested that the money would be better spent on more worthy causes: helping victims of natural disasters and wars, addressing systemic poverty, ending homelessness and hunger, working at restitution for Indigenous peoples, offering aid to developing countries, protecting the natural environment, and more.

Also pouring out was criticism of the large donations: that they were mere attempts to get tax advantages or crass marketing schemes. Some critics pointed at the Catholic church, wondering why its financial resources were not being harnessed for this cause.

Since then, I have been pondering the story of the woman anointing Jesus (Matthew 26:6-13). Jesus is enjoying a banquet at the home of Simon. An unnamed woman enters with an alabaster

jar of costly perfume and proceeds to anoint Jesus' head with it.

Why did Jesus praise this woman for pouring out the costly perfume when, as his critics pointed out, the proceeds of its sale could have helped many poor people in their town? What did Jesus mean when he said, "*The poor you will always have with you*"? How might this story speak to us today?

Both this story and the disaster at Notre Dame remind us that generosity is complicated. In an article posted recently in LinkedIn, fundraising consultant Rebecca Denny states that people tend to give to causes that are rooted in their own values, beliefs and feelings. The woman in the gospel cared greatly for Jesus; some of the Notre Dame donors have expressed their deep feelings about what the cathedral means to them personally and to their nation.

Denny also points out that people want to know that their gift—whether large or small—will have a positive and clear effect, that it will help bring about a solution. The anointing woman's act met the obligation to properly welcome an honoured guest to that home, something the host had failed to do. The donors to the burned cathedral can imagine a building restored to its former glory.

We give to the things we see close at hand, the causes that are visual and dramatic. (Did you see footage of the steeple coming down?) But does giving to one worthy cause mean that we can't support other causes as well? Maybe Jesus' statement about the poor wasn't meant to set up an either/or situation. On many occasions, Jesus expressed practical compassion for the vulnerable people around him.

And he frequently called others to do the same.

Denny suggests, and I agree, that "the money is out there" for many worthy charitable causes. So, consider a few challenges:

- **What if** we saw the resources God has given us—large or small—in terms of abundance rather than from the viewpoint of scarcity? Maybe, in addition to the cause we're already inclined to support, we could also stretch wallet and heart to include another need worthy of our attention?
- **What if** we opened our eyes to the less-visible opportunities to be generous? At the same time that more than billion euros were being raised for the beloved cathedral, kindly souls in the U.S. were collecting donations for three church buildings in Opelousas, La. Early in April, these primarily black congregations had seen fire rip through their places of worship, torched in a series of racist acts. As one commenter wrote, "Black churches are as sacred as Notre Dame."

Sometimes our donations might be "cost-effective," but the woman's expensive ointment suggests that generosity doesn't always need to have a measurable outcome. What if you and I asked the Holy Spirit to help us discern how to give—to discern when it's time for the costly anointing at a banquet and when it's time to host a meal for the vulnerable people in our hometown?

Maybe the Notre Dame fire can have another consequence: the unleashing of abundant giving, inspiring extra generosity in many parts of the world? How might God expand our hearts? ✎



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PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

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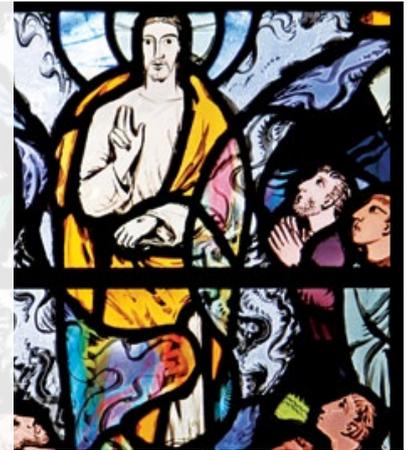
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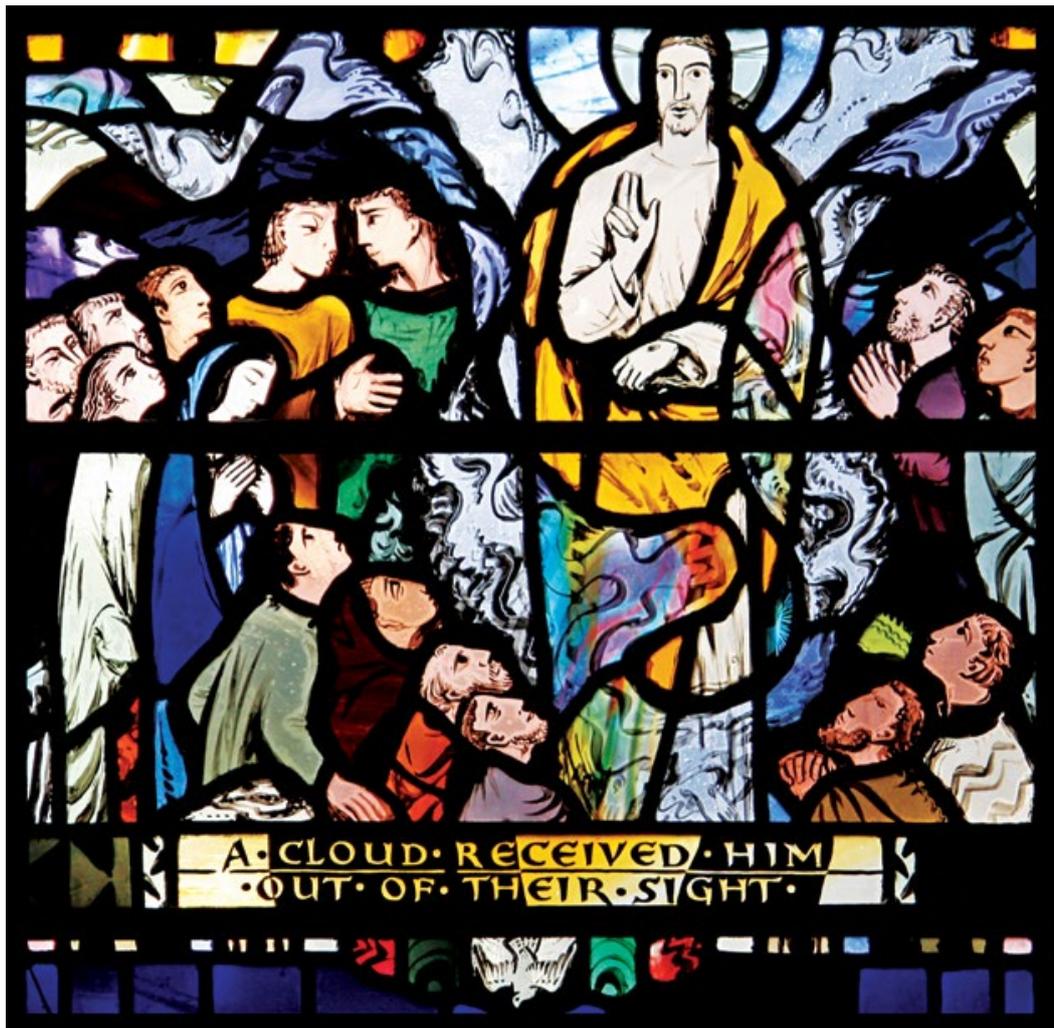
The Ascension of our Lord

To proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name

A homily by Leonard G. Friesen

Preached at Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Waterloo, Ont., on Ascension Sunday, 2018.

Based on Luke 24:44-53, Acts 1:1-11, and Ephesians 1:15-23



LAWRENCE OP PHOTO (CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Detail from a window in St. Etheldreda's Church in London, England, showing Jesus' Ascension.

And the staggeringly good news is that the Christ who is seated at the right hand of the Father intercedes for us now, even as he does for all who die in his name. That's why you really want him there and nowhere else.

Today's readings have made me think a great deal about the remarkable year Mary and I spent living on an Old Order Mennonite farm early in our marriage. We continue to thank God for that year and for Joseph and Erma having had the courage to take us into their home.

But what's the connection between today's texts and that experience? It is this: The very first Old Order church service we attended in the spring of 1978 was, in fact, to mark the Ascension of our Lord. It was on a Thursday and we were both struck by how Ascension Day was given the same weight in that community as Christmas and Easter.

So Ascension Day is a big deal for Old Order Mennonites, but what about for "new order" and progressive Mennonites? It certainly does carry less weight than Easter or Christmas in our circles, doesn't it? I wonder if perfectly modern Mennos would be more inclined to mock than revere Ascension Day, what with a stick-figure Jesus somehow rising up through the clouds with no oxygen mask in sight. But such mockery comes at a great price, I think.

So, as a sort of ode to the faith of the Old Orders, I offer three foundational truths to the Christian faith that are at the heart of today's readings:

- **The first truth** is, simply, that the Ascension makes it clear that Christ rose from the dead. There was a physicality to his Resurrection; otherwise, no Ascension was required. We see that physicality affirmed in Acts 1: 9: "[A]nd as they [the disciples] were watching Jesus was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of sight."
- **And this relates** to the second truth affirmed in our readings: The Christ who was raised from the dead by his heavenly Father, and whose Ascension we mark this day, now sits at the right hand of the heavenly places, as Paul writes in Ephesians 1:20: "God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places."
- **And the third truth** is revealed when two angels suddenly appear just after Jesus has ascended. They ask the still-startled



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS PHOTO

'The Ascension,' by Rembrandt van Rijn, 1636. Part of Rembrandt's Passion Cycle for Frederick Henry, Prince of Orange.

disciples: "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). Those words make me think of that great hymn: "Lo He Comes with Clouds Ascending," based on an even greater text: Revelation 1:7.

So there you have it: the mystery of our faith in three essential formulations that mark this day, and are bedrock for our Old Order brothers and sisters. The risen Christ our Lord has ascended into the heavenly places; he is now seated at the right hand of the Father; and, finally, this same Christ our Lord will come again, and, when he does, it will be to bring all of history to an end as he will judge the living and the dead. There

is a lifetime of prayer, reflection and praise in these three interconnected affirmations, but merely to state them does not answer what their relevance is for us, if anything.

Christ's Ascension reminds us, first of all, that we will also one day rise from the dead, as will those whom we love and who have died already. For we do not believe that those who have died are somehow already floating in heaven in disembodied form, as though finally and forever released from their physical beings. On the contrary, the church believes that those who have died await a time, at the end of time, when they will be fully and finally redeemed in Christ, body and soul (*Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, Article 24).

I know that this goes against the dominant Celine Dion cultural-type of a spirit

somehow floating up to who knows where, a vision of death that is as profoundly unchristian as it is profoundly commonplace in many funerals that I've attended.

Ascension Day also reminds us that Christ has not merely been raised from the dead to be everywhere present, as if he himself is now weirdly disembodied. That's the impression you get, for example, from the deeply flawed Iona Creed, which declares that Christ is raised from the dead to be everywhere present.

As true as that might be, it is a distortion of our faith, if that creed does not declare first that Christ is, in fact, seated at the right hand of the Father. And the staggeringly good news is that the Christ who is seated at the right hand of the Father intercedes for us now, even as he does for all who die in his name. That's why you really want him there and nowhere else.

Finally, the Ascension of our Lord reminds us that we, here, today, need to live every minute of our lives in expectation of Christ's imminent return in glory, when he will come to judge the living and dead. There is no news greater than this, and it is for good reason that the church has always turned to the assurance of Christ's imminent return as its greatest hope and deepest joy in times of persecution, then and now.

I think we should all be humbled and challenged by that truth, especially if we feel totally at ease in a society that happily declares itself to be totally unmoored from the Christian faith.

But there is one more question that needs to be answered, and it is this: What are we to do in this in-between time as we wait in joyful expectation of Christ's return in glory? After, all, Ephesians 1:23 boldly declares that we are nothing if we are not "*Christ's body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*" So how can our churches who are nothing if not the body of our Lord live out this time?

At last we arrive at the verse that took my breath away when my eyes were opened to it this week after having read the passage from Luke umpteen times before. It is where Christ gives his disciples their marching orders immediately before his Ascension in Luke 24: 46-47. These are Christ's final instructions to his followers: "*Thus it is written that the Messiah is to*

suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations."

I wonder how much you think our churches today are faithful to this call for us to be the voice of repentance and the forgiveness of sins in Christ's name to a world in need of no less. I wonder how comfortable you are with this as Christ's final instruction to you before his Ascension.

We might wish for any other last call from Christ than this one, but, like it or not, it is the call that we have been given. And, to be honest, this is truly good news, for each of us knows how far our own lives have fallen short of the glory of God. We all sin. We all know what it is like daily to drink water that will not quench our thirst. We all know what it is like to put our faith in false Gods, to deny our Lord in what we have done and what we have failed to do.

And, in some mysterious way, we know that in Christ we can become a people redeemed, a new creation in his name. And in time we know that Christ himself, as told

in Luke's Gospel, will send his Holy Spirit to clothe his church with the power it needs to live out Christ's command.

So let us join our Old Order brothers and sisters and the worldwide church this day in proclaiming good news to a world in need: "For this day our resurrected Lord has ascended to the right hand of the Father. May we also rise to the heavenly places through Jesus Christ our Lord, and may it be so one day for those who have already died in his name. And in this in-between time, as we await the ascended Christ's return in glory, may our churches and homes be places of true and caring love, a love marked by the call of repentance and the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever, Amen." ❧



Leonard G. Friesen attends Waterloo North Mennonite Church and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, both of which are in Waterloo, Ont.

/// For discussion

1. Does your congregation have church services to commemorate "holy days" such as Ascension Day (May 30, 2019), Epiphany, Good Friday or Thanksgiving? What expectations do we bring to holidays? How much have our churches been influenced by the secularization of society?
2. Leonard G. Friesen writes that the three truths of Christ's Ascension are that Christ has ascended into heaven, he sits at the right hand of God and he will come again. What is significant about these truths? He suggests it is wrong to think of Christ as being everywhere present in disembodied form. Do you agree? What questions do you have about Jesus' Ascension?
3. Friesen writes that, "the church believes that those who have died await a time, at the end of time, when they will be fully redeemed in Christ, body and soul!" Do you find the idea of a bodily resurrection comforting? Does this mean that we should prefer burial over cremation?
4. Christ calls the church "to be the voice of repentance and the forgiveness of sins," says Friesen. How can the church live out this call in today's world? What is the role of the Holy Spirit in this call?

—By Barb Draper

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/// Readers write

✉ Story makes you wonder why church is actually leaving

Re: “Church of the Way to leave MC B.C.,” March 4, page 15.

The article says Church of the Way is joining the Evangelical Free Church of Canada (EFCC) because of the “Being a Faithful Church” resolution.

I found it interesting that the article does not state clearly which point of the quoted resolution is the issue. Is the congregation’s reason to leave because Mennonite Church B.C. is offering to share the love of Jesus to all people, or because it isn’t offering love that encompasses full acceptance?

I could not find the EFCC’s position on LGBTQ+ people, so, if Church of the Way’s reason to leave is the second point, I cheer it on, and hope that one day soon the Mennonite church will offer full acceptance.

LAURA TAYLOR, MITCHELL, ONT.

✉ More ways to help creation than ‘climate action’

Re: “Reflections of creation,” March 4, page 4.

Thank you for addressing the issue of creation care. Anthony G. Siegrist and Scott Morton Ninomiya have presented interesting and important points to this timely topic. While the article deals specifically with “climate action,” I would like to add that Mennonite Central Committee’s thrift shops give us a practical way to think about reducing, reusing, repurposing and recycling—another action part of creation care.

JAN MARTENS-JANZEN, KITCHENER, ONT.

✉ How long is life?

Re: “Can we talk about suicide?” March 4, page 10.

I read the thoughtful article about suicide by Melissa Miller. Then I read the online response by Elaine Fehr, who came to the conclusion that taking or assisting to end a person’s life is murder and not in God’s will.

I reflected on it, and wondered if prolonging one’s life beyond its time is also not in God’s will.

Many of us may want to stay alive or be with our beloved ones for as long as possible, and we use different procedures in an attempt to achieve that, even when our mind is already gone and we cannot respond anymore. Do we want to live in such a condition, and do our loved ones want that for us?

Should sustainment be achieved through artificial alimentation? When medication does not get results,

should we employ new technology and connect artificial machinery to the body to keep it breathing for an extended period of time? Is that justified? Would that be in God’s will?

My wife was unexpectedly diagnosed with terminal lung cancer and she also had kidney failure from improper medication. Our doctor asked us if she should treat her cancer with painful chemotherapy and radiation to extend her life for perhaps a few more months.

Hildegard responded, “I am not afraid to die; in fact, I am curious to find out what comes afterwards.”

We thought about the consequences of such treatment and felt her time had come, and declined the doctor’s offer. My wife didn’t have to endure further pain in hospital and she died peacefully in my arms shortly afterwards.

HELMUT LEMKE, VANCOUVER

The author is a member of Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship in Vancouver.

✉ To say ‘glamour’ plays a role in where service is offered is unfair

Re: “Should Thrift Store purchases be ‘designated’ to First Nations communities?” March 18, page 8.

I was disappointed in the last sentence of this letter. To suggest that where Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) works is chosen for its glamour is hardly fair. Throughout my lifetime, I have heard reports from missionaries and service workers who felt called by God to go to serve. We have seen people called to work in communities here in Canada and others called to work somewhere else in the world. As a young man, I felt called to MCC service in India.

As we look at the affluence of our people here in Canada, it’s unfortunate that we aren’t generous enough to keep supporting workers who are willing to give up this affluent lifestyle and go to serve wherever God calls them.

Learning tours like the one to Zimbabwe are a way of motivating people to get out of their comfort zone and see the world as a high percentage of this world’s people live it daily. It is much more like a university course than a holiday. People come back changed and with a new energy to help wherever they can.

May we all ask ourselves frequently, “What is God calling me to do?” There is so much need in this world, and so many places to help. How can we determine which country and which area is most important? In our present global community, everyone is our neighbour.

HAROLD PENNER, ST. MALO, MAN.

✉ Editorial denouncing violence approaches 'palpability'

Re: "No more of this!" April 1, page 2.

Well written, emotionally expressive, touching.

Matters of violence such as those readily picked from the multiple news feeds of our day do, indeed, drive a stake into our hearts. We who continue living in relatively peaceful environs, unaccustomed as we are to violent stimulation overload, are bombarded by visceral images, sounds, descriptions and witness reports so well described in this editorial.

Thank you for reflecting on, and giving witness to, our shared revulsion at such raw and blatant planned violence, especially in spaces we recognize, or think of, as safe, set apart, even sacred for presumably innocent gathered worshippers. Thank you for including the valiant vigorous attempt of the pastor to reach for a visceral effect in the denunciation. It was approaching palpability as I read these words.

CLARE NEUFELD, PARKSVILLE, B.C.

✉ Carbon questions

Some scientists say fossil fuels, rich in carbon, are from living things fossilized many thousands of years ago. I ask, "Where was all that carbon before there were living things?"

Some scientists blame global warming on CO₂ created by human industry. Some scientists tell us that Canada was covered by thick ice sheets 18,000 years ago. I ask, "Has not global warming been happening ever since, causing most of the ice to disappear without any aid from industrially created CO₂?"

Some scientists claim that it's the human-created greenhouse gas, CO₂, that is causing global warming (climate change). Some scientists tell us that 95 percent of greenhouse gas is water vapour and 4 percent is CO₂. I ask, "Does that not mean CO₂ must be 25 times as effective as water vapour at trapping the sun's heat in order to be equally significant?"

Some scientists tell us that of that 4 percent CO₂, 3.4 percent is caused by human industrial activity, and Canada contributes about 1.5 percent of that 3.4

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

percent, so Canadian manufactured CO₂ constitutes about 0.0005 percent of the world's greenhouse gases. I ask, "What would be the effect of eliminating all Canadian-manufactured CO₂?"

Some scientists tell us that climate change is unstoppable, at least by human intervention. I ask, "To actually be helpful, would it be better to focus 'creation care' considerations on something other than climate change?"

JOHN HILDEBRAND, MISSISSAUGA, ONT.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Bang—Madeleine Brian Myungji (b. March 11, 2019), to Johanna Petkau and Jimmy Bang, Carman Mennonite, Man.

Dreja—Elden Morley Ronald (b. Feb. 27, 2019), to Alex and Jolene Dreja, Rouge Valley Mennonite, Markham, Ont.

Fehr—Kiana Edison Hilton (b. March 25, 2019), to Sarah Fehr, Faith Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Toews—Beckett Peter (b. March 20, 2019), to Chris and Lara Toews, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Deaths

Andres—Katherine (Kay), 85 (b. Oct. 22, 1932; d. Feb. 21, 2019), Grace Mennonite Prince Albert, Alta.

Bergen—Annie, 87 (b. Dec. 23, 1931; d. April 6, 2019), Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Dyck—Helene (Winter), 95 (b. July 18, 1923; d. March 25, 2019), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Eitzen—Elieizabeth (Esau), 93 (b. Aug. 26, 1925; d. Feb. 14, 2019), Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Langelotz—Anne, 85 (b. Sept. 20, 1933; d. March 29, 2019), Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Lantz—George O., 88 (b. March 4, 1930; d. Oct. 27, 2018), Wilmot Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.

Lehn—Peter, 88 (b. Oct. 5, 1930; d. March 13, 2019), North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Neufeld—Abram (Abe), 105 (b. July 25, 1913; d. March 22, 2019), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Neufeld—Frank, 94 (b. Nov. 30, 1924; d. March 27, 2019), Bergthal Mennonite, Didsbury, Alta.

Reimche—Mildred, 86 (b. March 6, 1932; d. Jan. 8, 2019), Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.

Schulz—Helen (Harder), 91 (b. March 7, 1928; d. March 26, 2019), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Siemens—William (Bill), 84 (b. Oct. 16, 1934; d. March 15, 2019), Osler Mennonite, Sask.

Toews—Anne, 98 (b. Aug. 7, 1920; d. March 21, 2019), Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.

Tschetter—Anne, 94 (b. July 26, 1924; d. Jan. 1, 2019), Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.

FROM OUR LEADERS

Experiencing God's love affair with the world

Ken Warkentin

So I'm out walking in the beautiful spring sunshine and I pass a church that has a large empty parking lot with a sign that says "No Parking." As I turn the corner, I see the official church sign that states "Everyone is Welcome."

The incongruity between these beacons to the public makes me chuckle a bit because I had just come from a nationwide mission consultation at which we, as church leaders, were asked, "How do Mennonite Church Canada congregations deal with big questions such as, 'What does mission mean for local congregations in Canada in 2019?' 'What does it mean for the regional churches of Canada to support that mission?' 'What does it mean for MC Canada to nurture the mission impulse that resides in people of faith?' 'What does international mission mean in a global context?'"

Jared Siebert of New Leaf Network challenged us with some current statistics revealing how few Canadians regularly attend worship services of any kind. These

statistics also indicate that the fastest growing religious population in our country is, "I do not ascribe to religion."

He had us consider the gardening imagery found in I Corinthians 3:5-7: *"What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth."*

The challenge is found when growth doesn't happen. In our Canadian context, growth is not happening. How then do we think about our role? Do we need to water more? Do we need to plant in a different space? How do we think about God's role?

Siebert rather evocatively suggested that perhaps this is also a time to compost parts of our garden. Perhaps the parts of our garden that are not producing fruit need to return to God's care for transformation back into fertile soil.

Another presenter, Betty Pries of Credence & Co., focused our thinking by asking, "What gift has God given to the

Mennonite church?" As we discussed this around our tables, it became more and more obvious that our primary gift for mission focused around our sense of community and how that is lived out. Sometimes our community is focused on hospitality, sometimes on work together, sometimes it is found in consensus building and sometimes it is present in justice making. How does this gift affect our mission?

Throughout the weekend it was clear in our worship, conversations, presentations and many interactions that we are not simply on a mission to repopulate the church. Nor are we a people who have no hope. It was clear to me that our mission is to experience God's love affair with the world, and to share in that gift to all that we encounter. ❧



Ken Warkentin is executive minister of Mennonite Church Manitoba.

A moment from yesterday



We "both have white uniforms," joked Harold Schmidt in a letter to his girlfriend (later, wife) Enid Culp in 1942. Schmidt, left, was a cook at the Seymour Mountain conscientious objector (CO) service camp in British Columbia; Enid was in nursing training in Ontario. The Second World War disrupted normal life in many ways, including traditional gender roles, as historian Marlene Epp has noted. CO men had to sew and do laundry, and women took on heavy farm work. The war was a time, however brief, when young Mennonite women and men blurred the divisions between women's and men's work in a way that future generations have come to take for granted.

Text: Lauren Harder-Gissing
Photo: Harold J. Schmidt /
Mennonite Archives of Ontario



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FAMILY TIES

Can we talk about abortion?

Melissa Miller

At a recent gathering of pastors, one man spoke of “a woman’s right to choose” with respect to pregnancy, then added, “I assume everyone here would agree with that.” In a room of Mennonite pastors, I was not so confident that all would be “pro-choice.”

Around the same time, in a Mennonite adult education setting, a woman spoke of “a society that condones murder,” continuing, “Of course, we have abortion, which is the same thing as murder.” She, too, seemed to assume that everyone present shared her view.

In both cases, I was aware that rarely does the subject of abortion come up, and rarely is it given any kind of open discussion.

More likely, as demonstrated in these two examples, I suspect we continue supposing everyone in earshot thinks similarly, rarely risking the effort to invite opinions from, and listen to, those who think differently.

Can we talk about abortion? Abortion is certainly a difficult topic for me, impacted by my commitment to pacifism and a personal history of infertility. Pacifism includes a pledge to avoid harm and protect life. The pain of infertility was deepened by aching for aborted potential lives who could have been cared for by would-be parents. Yet I encourage you, Gentle Reader, to continue in the work of difficult conversations, for in

our churches are people who have experiences with abortion: doctors, nurses and social workers, and those who have ended a pregnancy. How does the church provide support, compassion and understanding?

A number of things shape my support for laws that permit women to choose abortion. First, there are the women themselves who have told me their stories of physical risk and emotional illness; of a husband who demanded an abortion; of being young, alone and poor.

Would I really prefer to live in a society that would force these women to carry a pregnancy to term? Would I want to live in a society whose women’s lives are at risk when they do not have access to safe abortions? Is there sufficient evidence that our society values all lives, enough practical commitment that they would support such mothers and their children?

I answer no to these questions. I do not want to go back in time to a society that denies women this choice. It is women who possess the sacred privilege of life-bearing, and that is a blessing. It is also women who are left too often on their own to care for a child, and so it is women who decide. We do well, though, to remember the men who are involved. The men who share the decision with their partners, the men who insist on an abortion, the men who abandon their

responsibility.

I am old enough to remember when North American Christian churches had a more measured response to abortion. Religion writer John Longhurst, in an October 6, 2018, *Winnipeg Free Press* column, traced this shift over the last 50 years. He quoted author Jonathan Dudley, “[W]hat conservative Christians now say is the Bible’s clear teaching on [abortion] was not a widespread interpretation until the late 20th century,” in reference to a 1968 issue of *Christianity Today*, in which leading evangelical thinkers said the Bible “plainly teaches that life begins at birth.”

These thinkers would have been in line with former U.S. first lady Barbara Bush, whose views were shaped by her daughter Robin’s short life. In a journal entry on abortion, Bush wrote of being with Robin at “the almost religious experience of” her birth and subsequently at her death. Bush “sensed Robin’s soul entering her body at the moment of her birth [her first breath] . . . and she had felt it leave [Robin] at the instant of her death,” wrote Susan Page, Barbara Bush’s biographer, in the March 29 issue of *The Atlantic*.

Much more can—and should—be said. I pray we can be a community whose difficult conversations take place in a spirit of grace, compassion and mercy. ❧



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

Et cetera

Bottoms up, or not

Percentage of Americans who drank alcohol in the last 30 days:

- Protestants: 51 percent
- Catholics: 60 percent
- Atheists: 62 percent
- Agnostics: 76 percent

- 23 percent of white evangelical protestants in the United States consider drinking morally wrong

Source: Pew Research Centre

Photo by Brian Littmann (flickr.com / CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)



THIRD WAY FAMILY

Hold them close

Christina Bartel Barkman

It was a year ago now, when we were packing up our life in Manila, embracing in tearful goodbyes and embarking on a new path. On our departure day, our home was still full of our dear Filipino friends who had become our family over the span of six years. With mere hours to our flight to Vancouver, we were gathering up our last items, giving away plenty of our belongings and cleaning up a home we had loved.

With about 40 people gathered in our

together. We sat on the floor in a circle, held hands, breathed slowly and acknowledged the big emotions this day held.

We prayed together and thanked God for the beautiful journey the Philippines had given us, and asked God to lead us as we said goodbye to our loved ones and stepped into a new life in Canada. We held each kid tight, tears streaming, and reminded them that we are together as a family and, wherever we live, this group of six is home.

Somewhat spontaneously, I told my husband and everyone else in our house that day, that our family needed a moment alone.

house that day, and our four young kids running around with heightened emotions and excitement, we all felt the chaos of the day and the looming final goodbyes. I remember standing at the top of the stairs, looking at the dear people circling around the children, and feeling the overwhelming sense of the grave change ahead and the urge to hold my family close.

Somewhat spontaneously, I told my husband and everyone else in our house that day, that our family needed a moment alone. We brought the kids into our emptied-out bedroom for a quiet moment

In our year of transition, I have often thought of that special moment and the immensely important closeness of our family unit. We are an extroverted pastoral family, with doors always open to friends and family. And we love that! But we also covet the closeness of our unit and are sure to prioritize time together.

My husband has a colour-coded calendar with ample time stamped out for family. While making new plans, the yellow family blocks keep him from overbooking his week and ensure that we have quality time together. It's these disciplines

that keep us rooted together and remind us to keep our schedules clear in order to connect as a family unit.

Our kids have transitioned well since our move from Manila. I believe kids can move healthily through big changes in life if they are deeply attached to their family. We hold our kids close, even now, without any looming transition ahead.

The big move we had brought us even closer together and we continue to nourish that as parents, ensuring that they are safe and secure in our care. In the book *Hold on to Your Kids*, Gabor Maté and Gordon Neufeld write, "For a child well attached to us, we are her home base from which to venture into the world, her retreat to fall back to, her fountainhead of inspiration. All the parenting skills in the world cannot compensate for a lack of attachment relationship."

When we prepared for our move back to Canada, we often talked about the places and people we would miss, and how hard that was going to be. But then we would also ask the kids whom we won't miss and they would excitedly name each member of our family. We were sticking together and holding each other close, no matter what big changes lay ahead, and the comfort and confidence of that promise could see us through anything. ✎



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

Et cetera

Pulpit count dropping

National Trust for Canada, a charity devoted to historic places, predicts that 9,000 religious buildings will be sold or demolished in the next decade. There are now an estimated 27,000 buildings owned by religious organizations in Canada, based on government numbers from 2009.

Source: CBC (cbc.ca/news/canada/losing-churches-canada-1.5046812)
Photo by Greg Simenoff (flicker.com / CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)



VIEWPOINT

The irony of Mennonite (re)settlement

Peter Reimer

Jason Dueck's feature article, "Consider it (re)settled," April 1, page 4, celebrates the 40th anniversary of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada's efforts in resettling Vietnamese refugees to Canada in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Apparently, approximately 4,000 refugees were sponsored by Mennonite and Brethren in Christ church members over a period of about 18 months.

A mere century prior to this effort, the 1870s decade and following, Mennonites themselves were immigrants to Canada and, specifically for my family, Manitoba. Now, 140 years after our own successful Mennonite migration to and settlement in this country, we are celebrating our 1970's efforts to help Vietnamese settle in Canada as well.

To my mind, an unfortunate irony exists within these historical events. Mennonite settlement in Manitoba was a direct possibility because of war/power/bloodshed in "clearing the Prairies" of Indigenous populations to make way for the westward expansion of the newly minted Canadian government (1867).

Now we celebrate the 40th anniversary of MCC efforts of "(re)settlement" of Canada by sponsoring refugees to "our home," a land which many Indigenous people say was stolen from them and given to settlers, Mennonites included.

Mennonites blithely "turned the other cheek" and looked away from actions that dispossessed Indigenous peoples of their land, continued to look away for the next 100 years from the "Indian problem" that we benefitted so immensely from, and still continue to look away from the injustice. This is an ironic misinterpreta-

tion of the biblical injunction to "turn the other cheek" (Matthew 5).

The title of Jason Dueck's article provides, in my mind, a clear indication of how far we, as Mennonites, have yet to go in acknowledging and recognizing our relationship to First Nations and our complicity in that act of dispossession, our lack of awareness that we are recent interlopers, that the Mennonite historical narrative includes a desperate scramble for *Heimat* (home or homeland) at the expense of Indigenous peoples, and that there has been a deep chasm created between our people and Yahweh, that God of love and justice.

We casually settle, and with more than a little triumphalism we invite and celebrate (re)settlement of a land we unjustly occupy, blatantly ignoring the that our

Mennonite presence in Canada rests on a foundation of injustice and genocide.

It would be interesting to know how many Anishinaabe, Cree, Dakota, Nakota, Lakota, Treaty 1 elders were sitting on the MCC Canada National Program for Migration and Resettlement at the time of the Vietnamese refugee

Mennonites blithely 'turned the other cheek' and looked away from actions that dispossessed Indigenous peoples of their land

crisis of the 1970s or, indeed, how many Treaty 1 elders sit on that same board today.

Yahweh, that God of justice, speaking through the prophet Micah, counsels the people of Jerusalem and Judah against covetousness of land: "*Woe to those who . . . covet fields and seize them. They defraud the people of their homes, and rob them of their inheritance*" (Micah 2:2).

Until we, as Mennonite settlers/people, recognize our complicity in coveting and robbing the Indigenous peoples of their land, we can only sit and stare across that ever-widening chasm between ourselves and our God, and pray that our hearts not be continually hardened. How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? ❧

Peter Reimer lives in Gretna, Man.

Et cetera

WCC contributes to learning platform on freedom of religion

The World Council of Churches has published "Freedom of religion or belief: A guide to biblical insight," as part of online training offered through the Freedom of Religion or Belief Learning Platform. The guide offers reflections and focus questions on how the Bible speaks of human rights, human dignity, universalism and other subjects. It also explores the Bible and the concept of justice, as well as the importance of the freedom to have, choose, change or leave a religion. To download the guide, visit bit.ly/freedom-of-religion-guide.

Source: World Council of Churches
World Council of Churches photo by Albin Hillert



LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

What 'confessing your sins to one another' isn't

Troy Watson

Confession is primarily between the individual and God. Yet Scripture encourages us to confess our sins to one another (James 5:16). Why is this important, and how do we do this in healthy and helpful ways?

For starters, confession should be a free choice on the part of the one confessing. Some churches have a history of making individuals publicly confess certain transgressions in order to receive God's forgiveness. Not the "harmless," run-of-the-mill sins like gluttony, gossip and judging people. No, no. Only really "serious" sins, like getting pregnant

small group or Sunday morning service. The impact of these confessions can be hurtful and destructive to the community and individuals involved. For example, when a middle-aged man stands up during a prayer meeting and says, "I want to confess my sin of lust here tonight. For years I've been lusting after Janet [a pseudonym]," you can imagine how unhelpful that confession would be for the church community, especially for Janet.

"Open mic" confession in any public setting is usually not a good idea. If someone is convicted and moved to

communal confession is using a litany or prayer of confession that the congregation reads or recites out loud together. These can be very meaningful, especially for certain spirituality types. A creative use of Scripture, or a well-written and timely confession that poignantly articulates the depth of our personal, social and cultural responsibility for the injustice, inequality and suffering that permeates our world, can evoke a deeply moving and transformative experience. I appreciate having time to reflect on the words of a litany beforehand, so I'm prepared to speak the words of confession with honesty and integrity or to remain silent on any statements I can't speak in good conscience.

On the other hand, participating in a litany of confession can feel forced and rote for many people, myself included. The monotone drone of the community mumbling through a reading in unison too often morphs into white noise more apt to induce a yawn than a heightened sense of needing God's forgiveness and transformative power. (One of the definitions of litany is "a tedious recital or repetitive series.")

A litany or prayer of confession can be an effective expression of communal confession, without question, but this is not what James had in mind when he encouraged us to confess our sins to one another.

So what does it mean to confess our sins to one another, and why is this important? That will be the subject of my third and final article on confession next month. ❧

[P]articipating in a litany of confession can feel forced and rote for many people, myself included.

outside of marriage and drinking alcohol, require public humiliation to acquire God's forgiveness. (Perhaps I should add the sin of inappropriate use of sarcasm to this list.)

The irony here is that Jesus was conceived out of wedlock and he drank alcohol, meaning Jesus and his mother Mary would have been forced to stand before the congregation and publicly confess their sins if they attended these churches.

Few churches in Canada still practise obligatory public confession today. Thank God. I think it's obvious that forced or coerced confession is toxic and abusive. It has no place in a Christ-centred community, and it's certainly not what James had in mind when he encouraged us to confess our sins to one another.

Another form of communal confession some churches practise is "open mic" confession. This is where people are invited to confess their sins in a gathering such as a prayer meeting,

confess during a gathering, there ought to be a clear process to follow. The ideal process would involve having mature spiritual leaders available to meet with the person privately during or after the gathering.

Mental-health issues, privacy and confidentiality issues, the potential for someone naming or implicating others in a confession without consent, inappropriate boundaries, and a desire to be the centre of attention are just some of the reasons churches shouldn't practice "open mic" confession in public gatherings, including small groups.

The only exceptions might be "circles of trust" or "accountability groups." However, it's imperative that "circles of trust" have spiritually mature and well-trained leaders, and that accountability groups ensure everyone in the group is equally committed to confession and confidentiality, and that everyone has the maturity to honour this commitment.

Another common expression of



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NEWS

'Queer and quirky and profoundly worthy of wonder'

'Beyond binaries' event challenges churches to embody LGBTQ+ welcoming statements

BY JANET BAUMAN

Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

The gathering hymn, "God Welcomes All," called some 120 people to worship at the opening of the "Beyond binaries: Creating an affirming church" event hosted by Waterloo North Mennonite Church on April 6.

The vision for this event came from 17-year-old Thea Andres, who identified the treatment of queer people—a term being reclaimed by many in the LGBTQ+ community to describe themselves—as a problem. Andres partnered with Tamara Shantz of Pastors in Exile (PiE) to shape and lead "Beyond binaries" as a way to address it.

Alluding to Paul's description of the church in I Corinthians as "*the body of Christ*," Shantz said, "the body of Christ is queer and quirky, and profoundly worthy of wonder." She said that people of all genders are created in the image of God, are beloved of God and are essential parts of the body of Christ.

After worship, Andres presented "LGBTQ+ 101"—an opportunity to learn terminology and clear up misunderstandings. Andres described four major aspects of an individual's identity:

- **Biological sex:** assigned at birth based on genitalia, hormones and chromosomes.
- **Gender:** one's internal sense of identity.
- **Attraction:** who one feels attracted to sexually or romantically.
- **Presentation:** gender expression through clothing, hair, make-up, chosen pronouns.

Andres emphasized that, for some people, biological sex and gender identity don't match, and sometimes they don't fit into the binary categories of male and female. This can be difficult because these categories are loaded with cultural expectations.



PHOTO BY JANET BAUMAN

Rainbow-coloured cloth and name tags that included people's preferred pronouns symbolized the effort to create a safe space for people of all genders at the 'Beyond binaries: Creating an affirming church' event hosted by Waterloo North Mennonite Church on April 6.

Andres and Shantz, along with Peter Haresnape and Grace Gibney, formed a panel to share, with vulnerability and honesty, their stories of welcome and affirmation, their challenges and barriers, and what they want their straight allies to understand.

Haresnape described how, after his marriage at city hall to his husband, it was "immensely meaningful" to have members of his church help to create a service of celebration, "blessing us and praying for us and coming around us" in a powerful experience of welcome.

Panellists noted how important it was

to have safe spaces like Generous Space Ministries and PiE's Queerly Christian "to embrace that part of myself." They also addressed Mennonite Church Canada's decision, in the Being a Faithful Church (BFC) process, to leave space for congregations to make different decisions about LGBTQ+ inclusion.

Andres said, "Taking a neutral stance is actually an oppressive stance," because it leaves room for people to say hurtful and harmful things.

Shantz described being part of the BFC conversation as an incredibly "hard process," because "your community is still deciding whether it's okay if you are there or not, and you are already there . . . so it's creating an 'us' and 'them.'" She noted how heartened she was when someone in her church spoke up and asked, "Isn't it 'we'? Aren't 'we' a community of diverse orientations?"

All of the panellists emphasized that it isn't enough for a church to create an affirming statement of LGBTQ+ inclusion. More needs to be done to embody what that means.

Gibney challenged people to examine their own privilege, and to educate themselves. She said it is exhausting for people in the marginalized community to take all the responsibility to be the educators.

Shantz described such learning as an "intercultural conversation." People who are formed in "heteronormative patterns" need to take on a posture of learning about queer culture just like they would seek to learn about a new immigrant community.

Workshops in the afternoon featured more powerful storytelling and ideas about how to dismantle barriers so that all can fully participate in churches. Suggestions included:

- **Singing hymns** that reflect and celebrate a diversity of genders.
- **Varying language** and descriptions of God.
- **Interpreting Scripture** and doing theology from a queer perspective.
- **Displaying rainbow** signs, flags and colours.
- **Printing and verbalizing** welcoming statements regularly.
- **Wearing name tags** that include a rainbow symbol and preferred pronouns.
- **Making it clear** on a church website if the congregation is welcoming or not.
- **Noting events** in the queer community



PIE PHOTO

Tamara Shantz, left, and Thea Andres led the 'Beyond binaries: Creating an affirming church' event at Waterloo North Mennonite Church on April 6.

- in church announcements.
- **Blessing and celebrating** marriages of all genders.

To end the day, participants were asked to post lessons learned, perspective shifts and next steps on charts on the wall. Another action taken was to connect people interested in discussing how affirming churches could offer each other and the LGBTQ+ community more resources and support. ☸

Creating space to work towards inclusion

BY RACHEL BERGEN
Contributing Editor

Churches wanting to take the next step in becoming affirming of LGBTQ+ people might wonder “What’s next?”

A workshop led by Thea Andres together with Pastors in Exile (PiE) at Waterloo North Mennonite Church on April 6 aimed to answer those questions and help churches take the plunge. The seminar drew approximately 120 people, including church leaders and lay people.

It was made possible through a grant from the Centre for Peace Advancement at Conrad Grebel University College. Andres took part in the centre’s Peace Innovators Scholarship and Mentorship Program and was given a small stipend to host the workshop together with PiE.

The scholarship and mentorship program equips young leaders with skills to tackle a problem they’re passionate about in their community, allows them to network with other leaders in high schools across Ontario, and helps them launch an event or campaign to address the cause.

For Andres, that was creating a safe space to ask questions with the hope of helping more churches take the next step towards being welcoming and inclusive of LGBTQ+ people.

“There’s a lot of silence in the church around queer inclusion,” the 17-year-old Rockway Mennonite Collegiate student said. “I think it’s important for the silence to be broken and for people to be talking about it respectfully.”

Andres thinks there are congregations that want to be more inclusive but are afraid to ask even basic questions. “I’m noticing that people don’t know what [the acronym] LGBTQ+ means,” Andres said. “For me, ‘Beyond binaries’ was aimed at people who have decided they want to be an affirming church. A lot of this, for me, is saying, ‘Okay, so you say you want to be affirming, but how do we act that out.’”

Andres teamed up with PiE, an Anabaptist-rooted movement that’s passionate about connecting young people in Waterloo Region with vibrant faith experiences inside and outside of church walls.

Tamara Shantz from PiE said “Beyond binaries” involved morning worship featuring LGBTQ+-friendly hymns, a panel discussion with LGBTQ+ speakers who spoke about what an affirming church looks like to them, and afternoon workshops.

She said the event was right up PiE’s alley.

“In the community of young adults that connect with PiE, there is an immense longing for the church to be a place that celebrates and fully welcomes the LGBTQ+ community,” she said. “Many of the young adults who find themselves on the outside of the church are there, in part, because of traditional theology and policies that exclude and discriminate against those who identify as queer.”

For Andres, this event came from a personal place.

“I have gone through the feeling that faith and identity can’t coexist in the same way [as other queer people], and since the Mennonite community has been such a big part of my life for my whole life, I feel like that’s where I want to bring understanding to,” Andres said, adding that the most touching part of the event was when 100 people sang an LGBTQ+-friendly song to the tune of “All Things Bright and Beautiful.”

“It was amazing to hear 100 voices singing ‘Quirky, Queer and Wonderful.’ It was really amazing and touching and meaningful for a lot of people,” said Andres, who hopes to address some of the feedback gathered from “Beyond binaries” and tailor future events to the specific needs of people in the community. “I think working towards queer justice has been really life-giving. It’d be great to do something like this again.” ☸

Same Quest DNA, new flexibility for students

BY STEPHANIE JANTZEN
Columbia Bible College



PHOTOS BY JEREMY WALKER

Glenallen Christo took part in Quest with Columbia Bible College.

Starting this fall, Quest, Columbia Bible College's longstanding one-year discipleship program, is adopting a more flexible approach to its academic requirements in order to provide a richer experience for incoming students.

Under the current model, Quest students complete a high academic load while also spending 40 days on off-campus excursions that include alpine backpacking, tall-ship sailing, rock-climbing, spelunking, skiing or snowboarding, and canoeing.

Under the new system, rather than complete 31 credit hours over two semesters, the typical Quest student will now only need to complete 25 credit hours, with a course load that includes eight classes rather than 10. Quest participants will gain up to 120 hours each semester, allowing them to engage more fully in the relational aspects of Quest: being mentored, participating in intentional friendships and

pursuing spiritual formation.

Quest students will also now enjoy the freedom to add one or two additional classes to their program. Those who wish to move into one of Columbia's diploma or degree programs will be able to take the courses they need to stay on track for graduation within two or four years. Others may want to take an elective that allows them to explore an area of interest, learn a ministry skill or gain college transfer credits for their future academic pursuits.

"The reality is that not all students have the same needs," explains Quest program director Jeremy Walker. "I am

excited for the 2019 program changes. While the Quest DNA is staying the same, these changes reflect a more flexible model that gives students more choices."

For Quest students, the change is welcome.

Naomi Lindenbach, a Class of 2018 graduate, says, "Some people are more drawn to the academic challenges and others [are] more focused on relationships. The program changes help to facilitate both. I think these changes free time up to build into each other's lives and will bring people closer together."

Another recent change to the Quest program is a new emphasis on developing the practical skills that are essential during the transition to adulthood. Quest students now take a semester-long class in both self-management and Christian decision-making, learning what it means for a Christian to live as a capable and healthy human being. Instructors provide coaching in areas such as identifying strengths, habit formation, personal finance, relational boundaries, practising intentional decision-making, and wrestling with questions of calling and vocation.

"We want each Quest student to leave the program with a better understanding of who they are as a child of God, and with the foundational skills to move forward into their adult years grounded and ready for a life a discipleship," Walker says. ❧

To learn more, visit bit.ly/cbc-quest.



Olivia Harvey rock climbs during her Quest experience.

Sharing muffins and friendship

Breakfast program helps build community on campus

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DONNA SCHULZ
Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON

In 2017, when Kirsten Hamm-Epp was appointed to the newly formed Faith Leaders Council at the University of Saskatchewan, she likely didn't imagine she would be hosting breakfast for up to 50 students every week.

But when the president of the Graduate Students Association approached the Faith Leaders Council with the idea for a breakfast program, Hamm-Epp saw in it an opportunity to get Mennonite Church Saskatchewan involved. In her role as regional church minister, she sent a request to local congregations to supply muffins for the breakfasts, which would take place at 8:30 each Thursday morning.

And many bakers responded, supplying not only muffins but also money with which to purchase fruit.

David Kim-Cragg is the ecumenical chaplain on campus. He also credits the Peer Health mentors, with whom the Faith Leaders Council shares office space, with helping get the program off the ground. "They supplied volunteers and helped advertise," he says. "That made it more of a joy than a task."

The breakfast program began last September with 20 students.

"It was a big morning," says Hamm-Epp.

As word of the free breakfasts spread through the university announcement system, the program grew.

"This semester we've averaged 40 to 45 students each Thursday, and since March we've had 45 to 50 students," she says.

Five to 10 regular attenders arrive early each week to help set up. These volunteers started coming for breakfast during the fall semester. Some of them have begun taking ownership of the program "in wonderful ways," says Hamm-Epp. In late March, a group of Colombian and Mexican students made a Mexican-style breakfast of beans, salsa, guacamole, tortillas and eggs for their fellow students.

Hamm-Epp estimates that between 60 percent and 65 percent of participants are international students. "There are a number of Iranian, Colombian and Chinese students who attend regularly," she says, "but they don't keep to themselves." When they arrive, students have to sit wherever there's room, and this means mixing with others.

Lual, a medical student from South Sudan, says he finds that having breakfast on campus is "much better than eating alone," adding, "The food is good, but the social networking is so much more



Kirsten Hamm-Epp, left, represents the Mennonite church on the University of Saskatchewan Faith Leaders Council. She enjoys chatting with students who come for breakfast, many of whom are international students.

important."

He admits that lack of social contact has been a problem for him since coming to Canada. "Where I come from, everyone says hello to you," he says. "Here, no one says hello. They are all busy on their phones." At the weekly breakfasts he can have face-to-face conversations with other like-minded students, and friendships can form.

Hamm-Epp says that some students will take their muffins and go to class, but "many sit and chat for an hour." She also hears students tell her, "Hey, I'm leaving now, but I'll be here next week."

She notes that another smaller group meets for breakfast on Wednesdays, hosted by other members of the council.

About five to seven regular attenders also participate in an informal Bible study, which begins at 9 a.m. Together, students and Faith Leaders read through a chapter from Matthew's Gospel and share their thoughts and impressions with one another. They close their time together by praying for one another.

"I think I enjoy the Bible study almost more than the breakfast," says Hamm-Epp.

✎



Students enjoy food and conversation at the University of Saskatchewan Faith Leaders Council's weekly breakfast program.

MC Canada primer

What exactly is the nationwide church anyway . . . and who came up with all those acronyms?

BY WILL BRAUN
Senior Writer

If you care about connecting with the wider Mennonite community but have trouble keeping up with all the conference restructuring and acronyms—so many M's and C's—this article is for you.

If you form part of the small remnant of church nerds who love organizational charts, you may want to pull out your copy of *Martyrs Mirror* or a recent church budget and read that instead.

Welcome to your newly rejigged national sub-denomination

In 1999, after 10 years of spellbinding deliberations, various Mennonite conferences with members in both the United States and Canada reorganized along nation-state divisions into Mennonite Church Canada (MC Canada—not MCC, see below) and MC U.S.A.

MC Canada carries on today as the most theologically liberal of the approximately 30 Anabaptist groups—or sub-denominations—on this side of the 49th Parallel.

What follows is a profile of our sub-denomination—it's not officially called a "conference" anymore, although many of us still use the term—as well as some related entities, starting with the big picture.



Mennonite World Conference (MWC)

- "An international

communion of Anabaptist related churches" made up of member groups—such as MC Canada—in 58 countries, including 1.47 million baptized believers.

- **Annual budget:** about \$1.4 million.
- **Staff:** 21 (some part-time), plus 19 "staff-level volunteers" around the world.
- **Headquarters:** Bogotá, Colombia, and Kitchener, Ont.
- **Publication:** *Courier*.
- **In addition** to a youth network, various

commissions and excellent social media communication, MWC organizes a global assembly every six years (next in Indonesia, July 2021).



Mennonite Church Canada (MC Canada)

- "Our nationwide community of faith."

- **Roughly 30,000** baptized believers in 217 churches.
- **Worship in** 19 languages (as of 2016).
- **Headquarters:** Winnipeg.
- **Annual budget:** MC Canada's budget for the Feb. 1, 2019, to Jan. 31, 2020, fiscal year is not finalized, and MC Canada did not share a draft with *CM*.
- **MC Canada** is governed by a Joint Council, made up of the regional church moderators, one additional rep from each regional church, and three people elected at the delegate gathering.
- **Staff:** 10 (some part-time), plus 12 International Witness workers. Due to funding shortfalls, these numbers are both well below what they were just a few years ago. Areas of work: CommonWord Bookstore and Resource Centre (2 staff); Indigenous-Settler Relations (1 staff); International Witness (1 oversight staff); Communications/event planning (1 staff); Leadership and administration (5 staff).
- **International Witness workers:**
 - **Tobia and George Veith**, China.
 - **Jeanette Hanson**, based in Canada, supporting work in China.
 - **Bock Ki Kim and Sook Young Park**, Korea.
 - **Joji and Daniel Pantoja**, Philippines.
 - **Christine and Tom Poovong**, Thailand.
 - **Nhien Pham**, Vietnam.
 - **Cheryl and Michael Nimz**, United Kingdom (returning to Canada in June).

Recent changes/Future Directions

- **Since the 2017** national assembly, congregations are technically no longer "members" of MC Canada but only of their regional churches (formerly called area churches). In practical terms, this means congregations no longer send money to MC Canada, just to their regional churches, which forward a set amount to MC Canada. And regional churches, rather than congregations, send delegates to MC Canada assemblies, although congregations can send observers. These are the changes that came out of the Future Directions process from 2012 to 2017. Non-technically, MC Canada is still "our nationwide community of faith," and regional churches still do their thing, so don't sweat the details.

- **Another Future Directions** change is that support teams of people drawn from MC Canada congregations are now asked to raise half the funding for International Witness workers. If interested in joining a Witness Support Team, contact your regional church.

Regional churches

- MC Canada's five regional churches are composed of congregations within specific geographical areas. Each has its own staff and programs. (See chart on page 19.)
- Follow each regional church on Facebook and sign up for weekly email bulletins:

- **MC British Columbia:** info@mcbc.ca
- **MC Alberta:** jmiller@mennonitechurch.ab.ca
- **MC Saskatchewan:** mcsask@mcsask.ca
- **MC Manitoba:** dnburg@mennonitechurch.mb.ca
- **MC Eastern Canada:** MennoniteChurchEasternCanada@mcecc.ca

Camps and schools

Various camps, high schools and post-secondary schools exist within the regional church realms, with varying degrees of connection to the denominational offices.

Being a Faithful Church (BFC)

Not to be confused with Future Directions, although they overlapped for several years, this churchwide discernment

process lasted from 2009 to 2016. It revolved around same-sex inclusion and concluded with a resolution that affirmed the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (one man, one woman . . .) and left room “to test alternative understandings.”



Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)

MCC is a “global, non-profit

organization that strives to share God’s love and compassion through relief, development and peacebuilding.” Our sub-denomination is one of several “sponsoring denominations” of MCC. MCC Canada’s annual budget is about \$55 million, dwarfing other Mennonite organizations.

Canadian Mennonite magazine

The publication you are now reading serves primarily the people and churches

of MC Canada, although it is not owned by MC Canada nor is it the official publication of MC Canada. It is published by the Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service Inc. (CMPS), which is governed by a board appointed by MC Canada (4 appointees), regional churches (1 appointee each), and 2 members elected by CMPS. ☸

Regional Churches

	Number of congregations	Total expected donations for 2019	Amount passed on to MC Canada and related ministries*	Donations passed on to MC Canada as a percentage of total donations
MC B.C.	28	\$367,000	\$85,000	23.2 percent
MC Alberta	12	\$445,000	\$198,000	44.5 percent
MC Saskatchewan	28	\$497,000	\$187,000	37.6 percent
MC Manitoba	41	\$1,140,000	\$372,000	32.6 percent
MC Eastern Canada	107 (101 in Ontario, 5 in Quebec, 1 in New Brunswick)	\$2,178,000	\$950,000	43.6 percent

* These amounts include contributions directly to MC Canada as well as to Canadian Mennonite University, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, and costs of new regional church involvements that supplant work previously done by MC Canada.

News brief

‘Thirsting for God’ on a Lenten retreat

WALDHEIM, SASK.—On a chilly day that threatened snow, 11 participants gathered at Shekinah Retreat Centre’s timber lodge for a silent Lenten prayer retreat. Mennonite Church Saskatchewan’s Spirituality Resource Team hosted the April 6 event, with the theme of “Thirsting for God.” As they gathered around a stark centerpiece of dry stones and a bare branch, participants were asked to think about why they came. Some were looking forward to a day of silence and prayer as a reprieve from their busy lives; others appreciated not having to make conversation, while still others confessed, “Silence scares me.” The day consisted of four brief times of worship and instruction, followed by 45-minute periods of silence during which participants were invited to go for a walk in nature, write a psalm, or imagine themselves in a biblical scene and journal their responses. As the day progressed, participants identified their own longing for God and encountered Jesus, the living water. For some, the most difficult part of the day was sharing a meal together in silence. Without the safety net of casual conversation, eating together felt awkward, and participants found themselves avoiding eye contact. The day ended with reflection and worship. One participant spoke of how seeing water bubble up through a crack in the ice had been a gift to her. A closing litany based on verses from Isaiah 41 and Revelation 7 ended with the invitation, “Let anyone who wishes, take the water of life as a gift.”

—STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ



A participant at MC Saskatchewan’s silent Lenten prayer retreat spends time walking outdoors at Shekinah Retreat Centre on April 6.

Gathering 2019 events

*Workshops and excursions to look forward to
in Abbotsford, B.C., June 28 to July 1*

BY KATIE DOKE SAWATZKY
Mennonite Church Canada



Workshops on Saturday, June 29

• Being Jesus in Today's World

For many, the current post-Christendom reality is bad news, but for followers of Jesus this reality presents exciting opportunities for kingdom work. During this workshop, Colin and Judith McCartney of Connect City Ministries in Toronto will discuss opportunities to do effective and innovative ministry within post-Christendom culture.

• Beyond our Hopes and Expectations

Roberson Mbayamvula, pastor of Hagerman Mennonite Church, will talk about creating a multi-functional worship space. Hagerman shares worship space with Markham Chinese and the Tamil Church (Markham Christian Worship Centre) in Markham, Ont. The church's partnership allows the groups to afford the costs of city property.

• Igniting the Imagination of the Church and Healthy Self-Care

Four Gifts author April Yamasaki speaks on how we can ignite our imaginations but not burn ourselves and others out. This workshop explores a Christ-centred framework for self-care that embraces ministry with and for others, and draws us to rest in God's care, imaginations and all.

• What Excites Me about this Church

Mennonite Church Canada Witness worker Dann Pantoja will share field stories about the Witness partnerships between MC Canada and ministries in the Philippines. He will speak on the interfaith relational journey among Muslims and Indigenous peoples; peacebuilding challenges in a growing dictatorial regime; inclusive development through coffee farming; and new perspectives on what it

means to be a witness for Jesus in the 21st century.

• Finding Innovative Ways to talk about God and Spirituality

In this workshop, Troy Watson, pastor of Avon Mennonite Church in Stratford, Ont., will examine how some "post-Christians" and "spiritual but not religious" types are talking about God and spirituality. There will be discussion on how our conventional church language, metaphors and analogies are barriers that hinder people from understanding the essence of Christ's message.

• MC B.C.'s Engagement with New Leaf Network

Kevin Barkowsky, MC B.C.'s church engagement minister, will talk about how the regional church is partnering with the New Leaf Network, a Canadian church-planting organization passionate about new initiatives.

• *Voices Together* Hymnal

Come learn about a new worship and song collection for MC Canada and MC U.S.A. What are the ways *Voices Together* will be like and unlike hymnals that have come before? Members of the Mennonite Worship and Song Committee will introduce this new resource and talk about the aspirations, joys and challenges of creating a new hymnal and worship book.

Excursions on Sunday, June 30

• Chinatown: The challenges and opportunities of an inner-city parish

Led by Tim Kuepfer, Chinatown Peace Church, Vancouver. What does it look like for a small Mennonite church to love and follow Jesus in a neighbourhood beset by homelessness, addiction and mental-health challenges, as well as the arrival of

the hipsters, large new condo buildings and soaring home prices? This excursion includes a guided walking tour and conversations with community and Christian leaders in Vancouver's Chinatown.

• Indigenous cultural and historical tour

Stó:lō territory is a cultural treasure within the Fraser Valley and into the Canyon, surrounded by majestic mountains and centred around the Fraser River. Discover the stories and Hal'qeméylem place names. Also included will be a guided tour to Xá:ytem in Mission (Hatzic), B.C., which includes a guided educational tour of St. Mary's, a former residential school.

• A Rocha

Featuring a tour of A Rocha's Brooksdale Environmental Centre, this trip includes a walk around the organic garden and a chance to see part of the Little Campbell River Watershed, where A Rocha staff conduct conservation education work. There will be time for active discussion, exploration and inspiration.

• Westminster Abbey in Mission, B.C.

This excursion is a guided tour of Westminster Abbey, in Mission, B.C. Participants will learn the history of the Abbey and its Benedictine monks, and spend time in the sanctuary before walking through beautiful surrounding gardens.

• Bridal Falls/Bridal Falls Waterpark

A half-hour bus-ride from the conference centre, Bridal Falls is a family-friendly location where you can either enjoy the Waterpark or take a walk on the trails to the waterfall.

• Imagination Corporation

Guided by owner Dan Sawatzky, this tour will take you to downtown Yarrow to get a walking tour of the Imagination Corporation, a family company specializing in design and construction of theme

parks, miniature golf courses, restaurants and more. Opportunities to shop at Inspired Arts, a local B.C. artisan shop, get Birchwood ice-cream at the Mighty Moose, and spend time in the park.

• **Metzger Collection**

The Metzger Collection at Columbia Bible College is a museum that sets the biblical story within the broader context

of human history, from prehistory to the modern period, bringing it to life through replicas of artwork and artifacts. Experience the flow of time and the rise and fall of empires throughout history. ✎

Registration for Gathering 2019 is now open online at ignitegathering2019



Into the wilderness with hope

Women of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada dissolves current structure

BY JANET BAUMAN
Eastern Canada Correspondent
FLORADALE, ONT.

There were rich experiences and mixed emotions at the Women of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's Spring Enrichment Day, hosted by Floradale Mennonite Church on April 13. Along with inspiring worship and powerful storytelling, discernment about the future was on the agenda.

Marilyn Rudy-Froese, church leadership minister for MC Eastern Canada, framed the day with reflections on the theme, "Travelling companions: We don't know where we're going, but we know how to get there!" Using the Bible, personal stories

and prayer practices, she reflected on "wilderness experiences"—unsettling and difficult times that call for profound trust and hope in God for a new way forward.

Carmen Brubacher facilitated discussion during the business meeting. A combination of an aging demographic and difficulty finding volunteers led the current executive to name that what worked in the past isn't working anymore. The executive brought a motion forward to dissolve its existing structure effective the end of December 2019, and to put in place a working group to discern the way forward.

Brubacher was quick to point out that this doesn't mean nothing will happen in the future. It just won't happen under the current structure.

Women expressed deep gratitude for what has been and lamented the losses, but in the end they endorsed the motion. Two people volunteered to be part of a working group going forward, hopeful that new things can take shape.

The decision to dissolve the organization comes after other regional bodies have done the same across MC Canada.

The day ended with communion, symbolizing the deep connections women have felt through this organization over the years. ✎



PHOTO BY BARB DRAPER

As part of the Women of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's Spring Enrichment Day, Gloria Bauman, left, reflected on her journey with cancer, and Rita Bauman spoke of moving from her home in Abbotsford, B.C., to a dairy farm in Ontario.

News brief

MC Saskatchewan women explore themes of worship

Worship doesn't start with theology; worship starts with "wow!" "How often do you say 'wow!' when you enter worship?" asked Lois Siemens. About 25 women attended Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's annual women's retreat, held March 22 and 23 at the Shekinah Retreat Centre. Siemens, who is spiritual care coordinator at Bethany Manor in Saskatoon, and Emily Summach of Warman Mennonite Church, led the women in exploring the theme, "Walking in worship." Summach talked about creativity as an act of worship, inviting the women to think of themselves as co-creators with God. "When we create, we're glorifying the Creator," she said. "Our ability to create offers us a way to live counterculturally to the world around us." Siemens encouraged the women to look for memorable moments in worship. "Wonder stops you in your tracks and slows you down," she said. "Wonder happens when God breaks into the service." During the final session, Siemens invited the women to engage their creativity at three different stations. First, they tried their hand at writing a worship prayer. Then they chose a passage of scripture to illustrate with coloured pens. The third station involved a discussion of music in worship. As the retreat drew to a close, participants joined together in worship, singing and lighting candles of blessing for one another.

—STORY AND PHOTO
BY DONNA SCHULZ



Participants at MC Saskatchewan's women's retreat light candles of blessing for one another.

Seeking to fulfill God's mission in the world

Regional church leaders gather to learn to be a people with a mission rather than how to 'do' missions

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

CALGARY

To be clear, this is not a missions consultation.”

So said Ryan Siemens, executive minister of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan, in his opening address to key regional leaders on March 29. From opening statements to the closing benediction two days later, MC Canada's mission consultation was more about being a people with a mission than about “doing” missions.

Long-term MC Canada Witness worker Jeanette Hanson emphasized the importance of an understanding of mission in her address. “In business, mission is used as a subject in the sentence and we in the church have often used it as an object,” she said. “I think that this is an important difference. . . . This leads to the questions: ‘What is our mission?’ ‘Who are we created to be?’ and, ‘What are we created to do?’” She related stories of her time as a Witness worker in China that taught her the importance of entering ministry with an attitude of vulnerability while looking for mutually transformative relationships.



Calgary's Chinese Cultural Centre hosted the three-day mission consultation for Mennonite Church Canada leaders in late March.

Between five and six church leaders from each regional church gathered at Calgary's Chinese Cultural Centre for three days to engage the idea of the mission of the church with the questions: “What is and what could be for Mennonite Church Canada?” and, “Where is God calling us?”

Jared Siebert of New Leaf Network, a church-planting initiative, engaged participants in thinking about the context of today's church and society, identifying a trend of decreasing identification with Christianity and a growth in the number of young people who identify as “no religion.” He said that only 68 percent of Canadians identified as Christian on a recent census, whereas this number was 90 percent in 1970.

At the same time as interest in organized religion has declined, there is also a great desire for meaning, belonging and justice, he said, noting that, while the church is uniquely equipped to address these longings, traditional ways of being and doing church are obviously not connecting with people today.

His analogy of a dead tree resonated with church leaders. The resultant fallen log can either be “bronzed” and kept as is, or it can become a “nurse log” to nurture and grow new ways of being the church.

Betty Pries of Credence & Co. emphasized the need for spiritual renewal to occur in churches in order for a sense of mission to emerge. She led the group in discernment around what the core “charism,” or deep spiritual identity, of MC Canada might be or what might be aspired to.

After significant discussion, the ideas of hospitality, humility and community rose to the surface. Examples of how these charisms come into practice were shared by



Doug Klassen, left, incoming executive minister for MC Canada, talks with Betty Pries of Credence & Co. at the mission consultation in Calgary.

Donna Entz and Darnell Barkman.

Entz, hired by MC Alberta to build bridges of understanding between Christians and Muslims, said that, in her interfaith discussions, “I can always count on the Mennonites in my groups to be respectful to all others.”

Barkman, recently returned from MC Canada Witness work in the Philippines, mentioned how the Mennonite presence often allowed other, sometimes fractious, groups to get together in a safe “third



Betty Pries, left, of Credence & Co., and Jared Siebert of New Leaf Network, a church-planting initiative, were keynote speakers at the mission consultation in Calgary.



Participants at the MC Canada mission consultation gather for a group photo at Calgary's Chinese Cultural Centre.

space” for discussion and understanding.

Pries then asked, “How can we nurture the ability to talk across the divides in our own pews?”

The final day of the consultation focused on the question of “where is God leading” each regional church, and each region’s leaders worked at planning for practical ways to begin moving in those directions. Several leaders spoke of a need for tired churches to become certain of the identity as “beloved of God.”

An excitement around the reawakening of the practice of spiritual disciplines, such as prayer and the sharing of faith stories, led to discussions of how to support and encourage initiatives that are beginning to arise from among the congregations.

Others mentioned the revitalized communications structure in MC Canada as being a helpful tool in building

community and sharing resources.

In the closing address, Doug Klassen, MC Canada’s incoming executive minister, emphasized the theme of mission as the calling that arises because of deep connectedness with God. The revitalization of the church will not come from new strategies, structures or styles of worship, but from a deepened spirituality, he stressed.

He quoted Bernard of Clairvaux, a French abbot and a major leader in the reform of Benedictine monasticism in the 12th century: “If then you are wise, you will show yourself rather as a reservoir than as a canal. For a canal spreads abroad water as it receives it, but a reservoir waits until it is filled before overflowing, and thus communicates, without loss to itself, its superabundance of water.”

Klassen encouraged church leaders to spend the next few years rebuilding the

reservoir: “Then the church, our beloved church, will recover its task to be the communicator of living water out of superabundance. . . . When we do that, we become God’s reconcilers and ambassadors, helping to fulfill God’s mission in the world.”

The mission consultation was funded through a bequest given to MC Eastern Canada’s First Fruits Fund. ❧

To watch a video of MC Canada’s regional church leaders singing praises to God during their mission consultation at Calgary’s Chinese Cultural Centre, visit canadianmennonite.org/mission-consult.



PEOPLE

From mould to masterpiece

Winnipeg filmmaker documents decomposition

BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE
Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG



Joel Penner is a time-lapse filmmaker based out of Winnipeg's West End neighbourhood. But he doesn't capture typical scenes like sunsets or the bustle of the city.

His films reveal mould creeping onto raspberries, liquid oozing out of watermelons and flesh-eating beetles devouring snakes.

"I initially got into decay because I love looking for beauty in unexpected places, and I think that photography and film can be really powerful ways of showing that," he says.

Computer scanners set up in the basement of his home photograph fruits and vegetables and other plants every few minutes for weeks or even months at a time. This produces hundreds of thousands of images, which he then weaves together through digital editing to reveal fascinating transformations through decomposition.

It's this kind of process, as well as regular camera work, that Penner is using to make *Wrought*, a 15-minute film he's been working on for three years with his friend Anna Sigrithur. The film explores human relationships with decay, and how sometimes they consider it disgusting, like spoiled produce and rotting animals, and at other times they find it delicious, like fermented kombucha or beer.

"We're looking at the idea of how the way we categorize things is kind of arbitrary in a way because we're connected to this overall web of life," he says.

Penner and Sigrithur went on roadkill scouting missions and built a heated shed in a backyard in winter, where he photographed flesh-eating beetles eating their findings, along with dead lizards and snakes donated by a local reptile pet society.

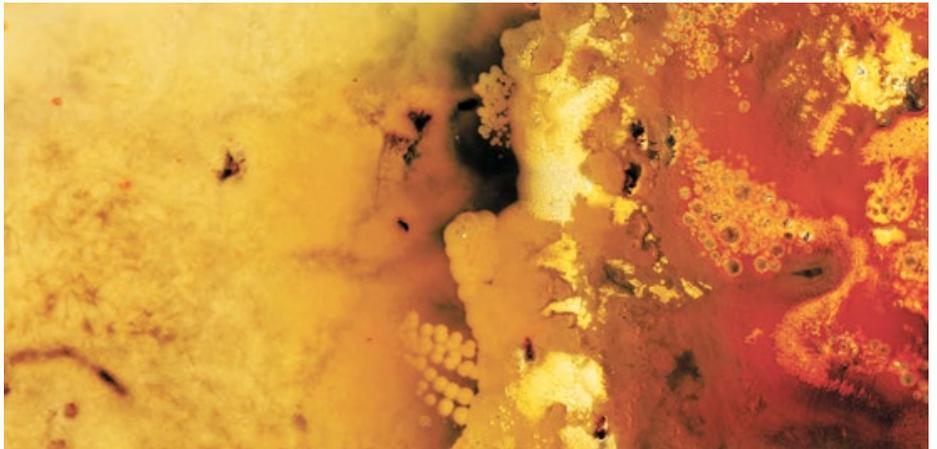
He built enclosures around his scanners so he could snap shots of wet material, like

rotting watermelon. "It was so different and so beautiful every time," he says. "Sometimes it would be these beautiful vibrant colonies of microbes growing, sometimes you'd get really cool shots of fruit fly larvae writhing around."

The duo are planning to release the film late this summer and are hoping to

tour it to different festivals in addition to launching it in Winnipeg.

Penner started experimenting with photography and time-lapse filming in high school. "I got into photographing scenes of urban decay, looking at these traditionally ugly things in a way where you see the beauty in them," he says. Soon



BIOFILM PRODUCTIONS PHOTO BY JOEL PENNER

*Microbial colonies grow in the juice of a decomposing melon in the film **Wrought**, which Joel Penner is co-creating with Anna Sigrithur.*



MOMENTARY VITALITY PRODUCTIONS PHOTO BY JOEL PENNER

*A still from Penner's film, **Momentary Vitality: The Paradox of Inanimacy** (2014), which he showed at the Mennofolk festival in 2016.*



BIOFILM PRODUCTIONS PHOTO BY JOEL PENNER

A mosaic of mushrooms captured in Joel Penner and Anna Sigrithur's film, *Wrought*, coming out in summer of 2019.

he was observing flowers decaying and moving on to mosses, common weeds and conifers.

With Mennonite parents, Penner was raised in an ethnically Mennonite household, although he didn't grow up attending a Mennonite church. He showcased his work from 2015 to 2017 at Mennofolk, an annual celebration of art and music made by people associated with the Mennonite

community in Manitoba, either religiously or culturally.

In 2016, he submitted *Momentary Vitality: The Paradox of Inanimacy*, a film focusing on the dying motions of flowers and other plants. In 2017, he showed his film *Pepo*, an exploration of the end-of-life stages of zucchini and squash plants.

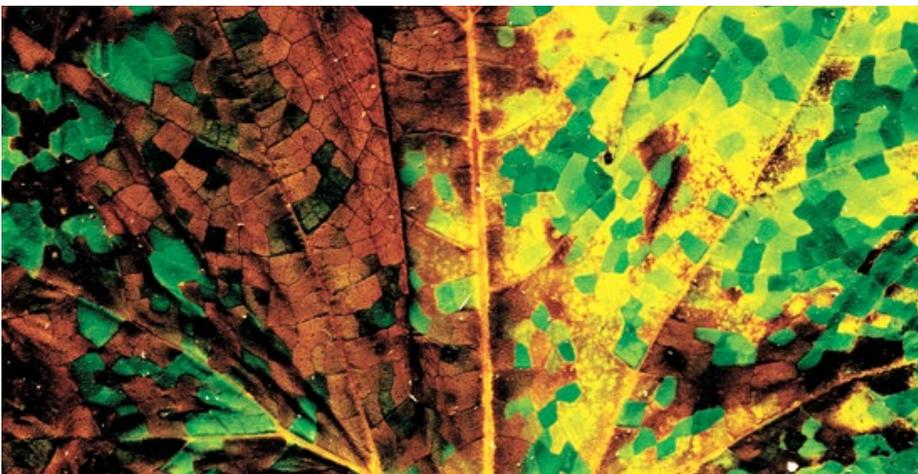
"In the times I've participated in and attended Mennofolk shows, I've liked how

art is approached from a more spiritual and contemplative perspective with the themes that each show has had," he says.

After majoring in German studies at the University of Winnipeg, running after-school programming for inner-city youth and teaching photography classes for many years, he is now making filmmaking his main focus. His work is even featured in an episode of *National Geographic's* new documentary series, *One Strange Rock*, currently available on Netflix.

He says he's been reading a lot about climate change and the alarming state of the environment, and he hopes his work can inspire people to care more for creation. He also hopes it can provide another narrative amidst the despair. "We can acknowledge that we're in a bad situation, but there's also still beauty amidst that, I think," he says.

Watching nature grow and die before his eyes is a meditative process, and thinking about his environment helps Penner to be grateful for life and the world, even in its imperfections. "For me, it's the idea that life is really beautiful and the universe is amazing, and that if you open your eyes, you can see that everywhere." ❧



MOMENTARY VITALITY PRODUCTIONS PHOTO BY JOEL PENNER

A desiccating leaf from a Gete Okosomin squash plant, captured in Penner's film, *Pepo* (2015).

Rudy Wiebe honoured with CMU Pax Award

'I have received many other awards, but to get an award like this from my own community is really important to me.'

BY JOHN LONGHURST
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

Fifty-seven years ago, a young Mennonite author published a book that turned the Canadian Mennonite world upside down.

That author was Rudy Wiebe, and the book was *Peace Shall Destroy Many*, the first novel written in English by a Mennonite about Mennonites in Canada. The book, which offered an honest and pointed portrait of Mennonite life on the Prairies during the Second World War, provoked a great deal of anger and pain.

"It was hard on them," says Wiebe, now 84, of how the book impacted some members of his denomination. "It was a tough story."

In the book, Wiebe explored how Mennonites in the fictitious community of Wapiti, Sask., opposed the war while, at the same time, their church was divided by conflict and broken relationships.

"It was difficult for the older generation to handle," he says of the book, which he once described as a "bombshell" for many Canadian Mennonites. "They didn't speak English, they weren't accustomed to reading fiction, and they didn't share insider problems with the outside world," he shares.

Publication of the book was hard on Wiebe, too. At the time, he was the new editor of the *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, the official English-language publication of that denomination.

As the criticism mounted, Wiebe knew he couldn't stay editor of the *Herald*.

"I wasn't fired, but I resigned before they would have fired me," he says. "There was no question. I couldn't continue."

That decision led to a distinguished 25-year career as a professor of English at the University of Alberta, and as an award-winning author of 33 books, anthologies

and collections of essays about faith, life on the Canadian Prairies, and about western Canada's Indigenous peoples.

Along the way, Wiebe was a two-time recipient of the Governor General's Award for Fiction; he also received the Writer's Trust Non-Fiction Prize and the Charles Taylor Prize for his memoir of growing up in Saskatchewan. In 2000, he was named an officer in the Order of Canada.

On April 4, Wiebe received another honour when he was given the Pax Award by Canadian Mennonite University (CMU).

The award, created to honour people "who lead exemplary lives of service, leadership and reconciliation in church and society," was given to Wiebe for how "his works have been critical in exposing societal concerns," and for "the patience and empathy his works awaken," according to CMU president Cheryl Pauls.

For Wiebe, the award from CMU was "particularly welcome" since it is coming from his own faith tradition. "I have received many other awards, but to get an award like this from my own community is really important to me," he says.

While the award is called Pax—"peace," he notes that when *Peace Shall Destroy Many* was published "it destroyed peace for many." But, because of it, "I have never been able to stop writing, not for the rest of my life."

A Christian writer

Despite how some Mennonites responded to *Peace Shall Destroy Many*, Wiebe never became angry with the church nor lost his faith. Although the mainstream writing world is a quite secular place, he is quite happy to call himself a Christian writer.

"That means I'm a believer and a follower



CMU PHOTO

Mennonite author Rudy Wiebe, left, was interviewed by Sue Sorensen, associate professor of English at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), on April 4, before being presented with the PAX Award by CMU president Cheryl Pauls.

of Jesus Christ," he says. "I try to look at the world in the way Jesus tried to teach us."

That doesn't mean he has faith all figured out or that he lives perfectly as a Christian. Living faithfully is "sometimes hard to maintain," he says.

His understanding of his faith has also changed over the decades. "We live as Christians in a world that keeps changing," he says. "You just can't go plodding along thinking I know what's right and what we've been taught for the last 500 years or something like that is the only right thing."

"The world changes, and you need an imagination to understand that. You can't just say that certain practices today are out the window because they didn't exist in Jesus' time. This is where the imagination and spiritual discernment are important."

As for whether being so open about his faith has ever hurt him as a writer, Wiebe says no.

"People kept publishing my books," he says, noting *Peace Shall Destroy Many* has never gone out of print and is still taught in high schools.

"There was never any question about what my approach to the story was, and they didn't object to my philosophy in life. Nobody objected to me [about my faith] in terms of the publishing world." ❧

To read more of John Longhurst's interview with Rudy Wiebe, visit canadianmennonite.org/rw19.



Coffee and community

Young entrepreneur describes his business as 'a social enterprise being funded by the coffee shop'

BY RACHEL BERGEN
Contributing Editor
WINNIPEG

Five years ago, Brock Peters dreamed of an affordable coffee shop where everyone in the community would feel comfortable going.

"Sometimes, when I walked into coffee shops in the city, I felt like 'I'm not cool enough to be here,'" he says.

A couple of years later, the 29-year-old Winnipegger decided to put his money where his mouth was, and he opened Strong Badger Coffee in the heart of Winnipeg's West End, the city's most ethnically diverse neighbourhood.

Peters isn't Mennonite by blood, but attended Westgate Mennonite Collegiate from grades 7 through 12, took part in the Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) Outtatown program in South Africa in 2009, and graduated from CMU in 2012.

He says his faith was formed, in part, during this time. And it was his faith that informed his decision to open Strong Badger.

'Fostering an inclusive ethos'

Peters says the coffee shop was almost an extension of himself, a second personality. The name was even a combination of the Irish and Gaelic meanings of his name.

"It was a really personal endeavour," he says. "I didn't want to focus on maximizing turnover or anything. For me, it was to have the space, and develop the relationships in the space. The coffee was a vehicle for that. In a way it was a social enterprise being funded by the coffee shop."

The space itself, a hole in the wall on Ellice Avenue, was very much to Peters' taste. The chairs were mismatched, the tables were made in his dad's garage, and it was cozy. "Some people say it was like walking into someone's living room," he says.

That helped foster a sense of community in which everyone—young families,



PHOTO COURTESY OF BROCK PETERS

Brock Peters was the owner and operator of Strong Badger Coffee until March 16, 2019.

low-income individuals or people who were just in the area and wanted a coffee—could feel comfortable.

Peters served quality coffee roasted in Manitoba at an affordable price so that



customers, regardless of their income bracket, could feel comfortable entering the shop. Although it maybe didn't make the most business sense, it made sense in terms of his values.

"My faith informed a lot of my approaches in terms of wanting to deal with people in a just way, in a humble way," he says. "That was big for me, taking a humble approach to hospitality and creating an inclusive ethos."

Strong Badger became a meeting place for people who maybe wouldn't have spoken elsewhere. "Sometimes people from vastly different walks of life would get to know each other and develop that connection," he says. "I had one regular who was on social assistance and had developmental disabilities, and one time he met the mayor [of Winnipeg, Brian

Bowman] because he came in. Little things like that, people would never interact in real life, but in this place they'd sit across the table from each other."

Although Peters found a loving, supportive community at Strong Badger, the business and the work involved took its toll. It was so connected to his identity that he spent between 60 and 80 hours a week there to keep it up and running. So, when his lease was up and he was asked to sign for another three years, he gave it some serious thought.

The end of an era

After three years in business, Strong Badger Coffee closed its doors to the public on March 16.

Peters says the decision was a difficult one, but a number of factors contributed to it.

"It was really taxing on my energy and my mental health," he says. "But it was also too small. I was holding music nights and stuff, and it was packed in there. The practical considerations lined up with the personal ones."

Since Strong Badger closed, Peters has spent most of his days moving out of the space.

"I actually just came from taking down the sign outside," he says. "It's been tough dismantling the dream. It's been emotionally labour intensive. I'm pretty convinced it was the right decision for me, though it wasn't an easy decision."

Peters says he is going to work with a long-time customer and friend doing home renovations for the summer and decide where to go from there. "I'm looking forward to coming home at the end of the day with just paint on my hands," he says. "I was taking so much of my work home with me before." ‡



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Video: The art of guitar-making

Phil Campbell-Enns, a pastor at Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, takes you inside the workshop where he builds guitars. canadianmennonite.org/video/pce-guitars



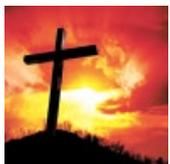
Conscientious (tax) objectors

Ernie and Charlotte Wiens don't send the federal government everything they owe it—the part that violates their conscience. That's the estimated 10 percent of Canada's budget spent on the military. canadianmennonite.org/tax-resistance



A Canada committed to genuine and mutual relationships

On the CM blog, Rick Cober Bauman, executive director of Mennonite Central Committee Canada, writes about why Bill C-262 is important to him. canadianmennonite.org/change-worldview



Should the date of Easter be fixed?

Easter was on April 21 this year. Last year, it was April 1. Next year, it is April 12. Why does it move around? Would it be easier if we celebrated it on the same date every year? canadianmennonite.org/blog/easter-fixed

WE'VE REVIVED OUR BLOG!

The CM blog is back up and running with current, curated content. Check it out for stories you won't find in print!

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Should the date of Easter be fixed?

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A complicated relationship

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How Gareth Brandt makes a tagline real for students

Columbia Bible College
Abbotsford, British Columbia

“Who am I? Where is God calling me in the next chapter of my life?”

For Columbia Bible College faculty member Gareth Brandt, there is no better job than his. “It’s sacred territory—holy ground—to walk with students in some of the big questions of their lives,” he says. “I get the privilege of helping students to process these questions well.”

Brandt sees himself as a guide rather than an expert. After two decades of teaching spiritual formation, he’s observed the way learning goes much deeper if students are discovering ideas for themselves.

“You best learn about prayer by praying!” he says with a smile, “not by listening to me tell you all the books I’ve read about prayer.”

In his first-year spiritual formation class, assignments involve reflecting on the experience of practising a series of spiritual disciplines: everything from meditation to simplicity.

With fourth-year students, Brandt is best known for his Spiritual Formation and Discernment course. Here, students reflect on their past, their families, their personalities and their values. And then they seek to discern their future.

A highlight is the “discernment session,” in which students invite a group of confidants—faculty, classmates, mentors—to speak into their gifts and abilities, and ask clarifying questions. For many, there are



Gareth Brandt

“aha” moments that point them towards their next steps in life.

“It’s really affirming for students,” Brandt says. “I hope they will then leave Columbia with a sense of identity, direction, and ongoing openness to God’s loving and surprising work in their lives.”

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June 28 to July 1, 2019
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Guest Speaker: Dr. Elaine Heath

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



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Calendar

British Columbia

June 2: Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. presents "Immigrant trauma and finding belonging in community: The story of post-Second World War Mennonite refugees," with speakers Marlene Epp and Paul Born, at King Road MB Church, Abbotsford, at 2:30 p.m. Fasha and special music.

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

Alberta

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

June 7-9: MC Alberta women's retreat, at the Sunnyside Retreat Centre, Sylvan Lake. Speaker: Irma Fast Dueck. Theme: "The faces of Mary:

Companion on the journey." For more information, visit mcawomen.ca.

June 12: Annual heritage retreat, at Camp Valaqua. For more information, email ruthannagetsmail@gmail.com.

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

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

Saskatchewan

May 24-26: SMYO youth retreat, at Elim. For youth in grades 6 to 12.

May 25: RJC golf tournament fundraiser, at Valley Regional Park, Rosthern.

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

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

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

Manitoba

Until June 22: Two exhibitions at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg: "Who is in and who is out?" by Yisa Akinbolaji and "Luminous" by Gabriela Agüero.

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

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

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

Ontario

May 4: Mennonite Mass Choir and the Waterloo Chamber Players present Felix Mendelssohn's symphonic cantata, Hymn of Praise, at St. Peter's

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Lutheran Church, Kitchener, at 7:30 p.m.

May 4,5: Soli Deo Gloria Singers present "A time for everything under heaven"; (4) at UMEI Christian High School, Leamington, at 7:30 p.m., (5) at Leamington United Mennonite Church, at 3 p.m. For tickets, call UMEI at 519-326-7448.

May 5: Detweiler Meetinghouse, Roseville, hosts "Sounds of spring," featuring Bluebird, a Guelph-based women's cappella barbershop quartet, and the Fiddlestix String Quartet from Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, at 2:30 p.m.

May 6-7: "Understanding conflict: Foundations," presented by Credence & Co, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo.

May 8-9: "Understanding conflict: Advanced," presented by Credence & Co, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo.

May 8-9: "Healthy boundaries in the context of ministry," at Faith Mennonite Church, Leamington. For more information, visit mcecc.ca.

May 10-12: Junior youth (grades 6 to 8) retreat, at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp, Sauble Beach. Activities include learning new songs from the new

Voices Together hymnal, creating a music video and worshipping in a Taizé style.

May 11: Silver Lake Mennonite Camp Paddle-the-Grand Fundraiser and AGM, at 2pm. A fun, family-friendly canoe excursion down the Grand River followed by a barbecue dinner at Kiwanis Park, Kitchener. Visit slmc.ca to register or donate.

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

Menno Simons Centre



Student Residence Coordinator - Vancouver, BC

The Pacific Centre for Discipleship Association seeks to employ one member of a married couple, in a 3/4s time capacity, starting June 2019 (flexible start date). The couple, both of whom are important to the Centre's community and student life, would live in our private one bedroom suite. Preference will be given to applicants who have attended university and are familiar with the Anabaptist tradition. Job duties include student ministry, administration, and maintenance. The successful candidate would also work with Board and Committee members on our upcoming ministry at the UBC Gateway.

For more information about the position, visit: pcda.bc.ca/msc-residence/rc2019job



Employment opportunity
Intentional Transition Pastor
Calgary, Alberta

We are a multigenerational, urban church of 174 members. The fellowship was established in 1956 and is a member of Mennonite Church Alberta and MC Canada.

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

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

Please direct inquiries to: office@foothillsmennonite.ca, Attention of the Chair, Search Committee.



Employment Opportunity

Associate Pastor of Youth Ministries

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

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

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

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



SARGENT AVENUE MENNONITE CHURCH

Employment Opportunity

Associate Pastor 0.8 to 1.0 FTE

Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church is a community of Anabaptists committed to following Jesus. We share our excitement for discipleship through choral singing and diverse musical expression. A dedicated core group of young adults seeks creative ways of sustaining creation and community, and our strong contingent of older adults are active volunteers in the community and highly value fellowship. The gifts of children, youth, adults and seniors are nurtured and shared in worship together and in service beyond church walls.

We prayerfully invite applications for an Associate Pastor who will work as part of a pastoral team. We desire applicants who have a commitment to Anabaptist theology, skills in inter-generational relationship building as well as general pastoral duties.

The position is 0.8 to 1.0 FTE and will be filled as soon as a suitable candidate is found. Sargent church information may be found at <https://www.samc.ca>.

To apply or for more information, contact Rick Neufeld at rneufeld@mennonitechurch.mb.ca

Photo finish



PHOTO BY EMMA BERG / TEXT BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

Youth and sponsors roasted bannock around an outdoor fire at Camp Assiniboia for a tasty afternoon snack. Around 50 youth and sponsors gathered from March 8 to 10 for the Manitoba Mennonite Youth Organization's junior-high youth retreat. It was the first warm weekend of the season, which meant spending lots of time outside, including skiing and playing broomball, snow rec and a camp-wide night game. Emma Berg directed the retreat and Paul Loewen was guest speaker, exploring the relationship between faith and science.