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## EDITORIAL

# Words and community

BY VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER  
Executive Editor



**H**ow can helpful, respectful conversation happen in the church? Who can speak? What are they allowed to say? How can words cause harm? These questions emerge from time to time in response to content in this magazine.

As a Christian community, we need to talk about hard topics, things that we value greatly and things about which we disagree. While it would be comfortable to deal only with the pleasant things all can agree on, that would not be an honest or fair way to live. Dealing in superficial agreements does not create a strong community.

Sometimes church publications use the metaphor of a mirror to explain their role. They aim to share content that reflects the experiences of their many readers and what matters to them in their varied locations and life experiences. We at *Canadian Mennonite* see this as both an honour and a responsibility.

A key place where that mirror-like quality expresses itself is in the letters section, which in this magazine is called “Readers Write.” That space does not necessarily reflect the views held by the magazine or by the Mennonite church, but it is open to *CM’s* readers, for expressing questions, concerns and opinions. In a spirit of dialogue, we welcome thoughtful responses to our content. Sometimes the letters in this section affirm what others previously said. Sometimes the letters add additional information or ask questions.

Sometimes letters bring perspectives that differ from what was presented previously. (For submission guidelines, see p. 8.)

At times, people’s words there can cause pain, even though that may not have been their intention. Each sees—and interprets the world—through unique eyes. As the worldwide community struggles through the stresses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, our sensitivities might be especially heightened; our opinions might have some extra-sharp edges.

It’s no surprise that *Canadian Mennonite* receives criticism for publishing views that some readers find objectionable. Thank you to those who have told us—sometimes in very strong terms—about your concerns. We know that you care about how the content of the magazine might affect those who read it. We understand that some of it may even have caused pain for you personally.

We also have heard you, the ones who wrote the unpopular views. You too have cared enough to offer your thoughts and experiences with readers. Some of your opinions may also come from places of pain. You too are part of this reading community.

This is the challenge as this magazine seeks to reflect the wide variety of perspectives present in our church. There is a push and pull between the freedom to express one’s thoughts and the effect that free expression might have on others. *Canadian Mennonite* has a responsibility to be a place for all in the church. The practice of banning

or silencing certain voices doesn’t lead to healthy community life. But neither does the pain caused by words.

Are there some opinions that should not be expressed? What is the nature of the harm done when people express their thoughts in a public forum? Is it possible to prevent or mitigate harm caused by words? These are hard things for all of us to ponder.

Here is *CM’s* commitment to keep striving to be a space for thoughtful and respectful conversation. Will you join us? For letter writers, here is the challenge to consider carefully the words you use, realizing that they can do harm to those who read them. For readers, here is the challenge to keep your mind and heart open to listen, even to those with whom you disagree.

At the risk of depleting the Readers Write pages, I offer these words from a letter writer in the early days of the Christian church, “*Remember this, my dear friends! Everyone must be quick to listen, but slow to speak and slow to become angry*” (James 1:19). Let us all aim for words that build a healthy community.

## Correction

Members of the Edmonton Menno-Catholic dialogue group spent a two-week study tour in the remains of the city of Ephesus. Incorrect information was published in a photo caption accompanying “‘The bonds among us grew stronger’” article on page 22 of the March 15 issue. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error. ❧



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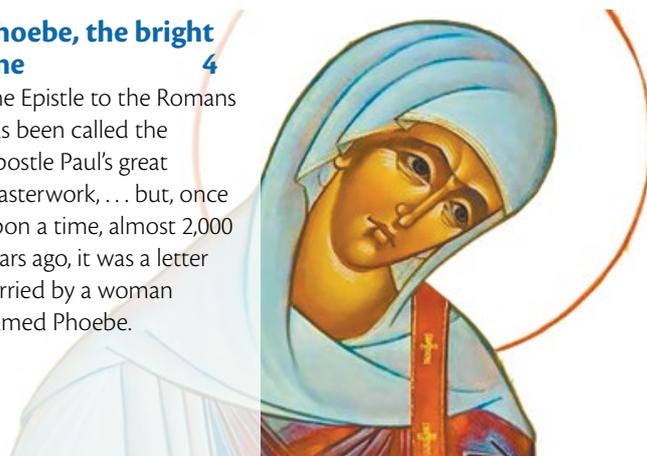
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## FEATURE

# Phoebe, the bright one

By Alison Li



*Saint Phoebe the Deaconess. (Source and date unknown.)*

PNGKEY.COM IMAGE (PUBLIC DOMAIN)

**T**he Epistle to the Romans has been called the Apostle Paul's great masterwork, the summing up of all his thought. It is a rich, dense and complex work of theology that has stimulated some of the most powerful reform movements in Christian history. But, once upon a time, almost 2,000 years ago, it was a letter carried by a woman named Phoebe.

In Greek, Phoebe's name means "the bright one." Paul says of her: *"I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae, so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well"* (Romans 16:1-2).

That's all we have. But this one sentence is loaded with clues to who Phoebe was.

Scholars estimate that Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans in the winter of the year 56-57 in Corinth. He had spent years founding communities of Jesus followers throughout Asia Minor and was now turning his attention west, to Rome and beyond.

Phoebe was from the Greek town of Cenchreae, about eight kilometres away from the city-state of Corinth. It was a small, prosperous community situated around a deep-water harbour, where ships would arrive from Athens, Ionia, Cyprus and the Levant.

Clustered around the waterfront were temples to various Greek deities. On the most prominent spot stood a huge temple to Aphrodite, where her followers could make ritual sacrifices to ask for protection at sea. On the other side of the harbour was a temple to the Egyptian deity Isis, who was also associated with the protection of seafarers.

In the midst of this busy port city, a small Christian house church had been

founded which, by Phoebe's day, was already vigorously spreading the gospel message throughout the region.

### **Sister, deacon, benefactor**

In Paul's introduction of Phoebe in Romans 16, he uses three terms to describe her:

- **First, he calls her "our sister."**

He is making the point that she should be considered the sister of all those who follow Jesus. This implied a deep responsibility. For many early Christians who had severed ties with their families of birth, their community of faith was a chosen family in which they had the obligation to treat each other with the same love and care as biological brothers and sisters.

- **Second, Paul calls Phoebe a deacon.**

Deacons in the early church had many roles, including preaching, teaching, showing hospitality to strangers and helping Christians who were in prison. The most accurate meaning here is "emissary" because one of their most important roles was serving as liaisons from one group of Christians to another.

- **Third, Paul says Phoebe is a "benefactor" who helped many including him.**

The Greek word Paul uses is *prostatis*, which is more correctly translated as "patron," meaning a protector, defender and guide. In Greco-Roman society, the term goes well beyond describing someone who donates money; the patron and the client were in a voluntarily and reciprocal relationship, with clearly defined social roles.

Paul doesn't use the word "patron" anywhere else, so its appearance here is particularly significant, as it suggests that he and many others are socially

dependent on her. Paul does not describe Phoebe in connection with any man; she's not "wife of," "sister of," or "mother of," as so many other women in the Bible are described. It seems that she is a woman of independent means, probably older, probably a widow, and someone who holds authority and influence in her community. As a patron, she safeguards the welfare of many people in her extended household and her community of believers. She is called upon to care for the needy, provide leadership and offer guidance—all weighty responsibilities.

Then one day Paul asks even more of her: he chooses her to be his emissary. What would taking Paul's letter to Rome have meant for Phoebe? She likely would have gone by ship, on a trip that would have taken about two weeks. She faced the prospect of storms, shipwreck, bandits and bedbugs, cold, hunger and exhaustion. She must have been a woman of courage.

Rome itself must have been daunting. It was the heart of one of the mightiest empires in the ancient world, stretching from Britain in the northwest to Egypt in the southeast, but one based on force and conquest, the subjugation of conquered peoples and the use of brutal violence. Christians in Rome had already experienced exile and would face terrible persecution in the years to come.

At the time of Phoebe's trip, there were probably five house churches in Rome. She would have needed persistence, resourcefulness and sensitivity to locate and assemble each of these groups. Only about 5 percent of the population was literate, so the letter would have been read out loud. If Phoebe herself didn't read the letter, she might have coached the person doing the reading, to help that reader understand Paul's intentions. Afterwards, she would have answered questions about this dense, complex text. So Phoebe was really the first authoritative interpreter of the Epistle to the Romans.

What questions did the Roman Christians have for her? Did they find these words comforting, challenging or puzzling? How did she answer them? Unfortunately, we don't know.

**The Epistle to the Romans has been called the Apostle Paul's great masterwork . . . but, once upon a time, almost 2,000 years ago, it was a letter carried by a woman named Phoebe.**

## Scripture is a living thing

Paul's Epistle to the Romans shares the good news that we are saved through the grace of God, not our own merits or good works. A second message, one that pervades all of Paul's letters, is that the Holy Spirit is a real and vital presence in the lives of believers. *"Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit,"* he writes in Romans 12:11.

Imagine the hearts and minds of those who first heard this message. Their God is not like the Roman deities who must continually be appeased through rituals and sacrifices; the one God offers salvation freely to everyone who has faith (Romans 1:16). Their God, who had once spoken from mountaintops and burning bushes, through prophets and priests, now lived and glowed within each one of them.

Paul closes by sending personal greetings to the believers in Rome. He names individuals and gives details about his relationship with them. These names suggest this was a diverse group: women and men, free and slave, Jews and Gentiles, and people from many different regions of the Roman Empire. They remind us that the Epistle to the Romans was, first and foremost, a personal message to a specific group of people—people who laughed, loved, struggled and suffered.

In our own day, the church is fraught with painful divisions, as sincere people on all sides wrestle with questions of how to best understand and follow Jesus. We struggle with meaning and interpretation, and how to apply words written thousands of years ago to our own complicated and very different world.

We must remember that Scripture is a living thing that should be listened to, repeated, memorized and inwardly digested. Each interpreter brings the weight of her or his own cares, concerns, learning and experience, to breathe life into the words for each new audience. What wisdom would Phoebe—a deacon and patron; a woman of courage, generosity and faithfulness; perhaps a sister, daughter, mother, wife and widow—have brought to the words Paul entrusted to her? Today, let us consider

## Then one day Paul asks even more of her: he chooses her to be his emissary. What would taking Paul's letter to Rome have meant for Phoebe?

whose voices we need to hear to help interpret the scripture afresh for us.

### From Rome to the ends of the earth

Finally, we return to the image of a woman boarding a ship in a noisy provincial port. The letter in her hand proclaims the one God who will not be neatly folded into the empire's pantheon. Phoebe can't tell whether she and her message will survive the journey, nor how they will be received if they do. Her message is a tiny flame.

The parchment will be passed from one house church to the next. In 400 years, Rome's empire will fall into ruin, but the words of the letter will live on. For more than a millennium, the text will be kept alive by scribes labouring over desks in remote northern monasteries. In 1,400 years, a German goldsmith will cast tiny pieces of metal

in the shape of letters of the alphabet. His system of movable type will allow Paul's words to be printed quickly and inexpensively, so that ordinary believers will begin to read and interpret the text for themselves. One day, Paul's letter will be translated into languages that Phoebe has never even heard of and studied in lands far beyond what she thinks of as the ends of the earth.

But Phoebe can't see any of this. She has only the conviction of her faith and a courage equal to her task. Aglow with the Spirit, Phoebe goes out into the world, bearing light. ✎



*Alison Li serves on the preaching team at Toronto United Mennonite Church. This is adapted from a sermon she preached there on Feb. 2, 2020.*

### ✎ For discussion

1. Imagine that your congregation received a letter from a beloved former leader. How might it arrive? How would it be shared with the congregation? Would it be preserved as a treasured possession? Would a congregation today react differently from the Christians in Rome who received a letter from Paul?
2. What are some possible reasons that Paul entrusted his letter to Phoebe? If it was a two-week journey to Rome, how long do you think she might have stayed? How might the Christian churches in Rome have responded to her? What questions do you think they had for her?
3. Alison Li points out that Paul refers to Phoebe as a deacon and a benefactor or patron. What do you think she might have done for the people in her house church? Do you have a person like Phoebe in your congregation?
4. Li reminds us that the letter Phoebe carried was "a personal message to a specific group of people," but that Scripture is a living thing and needs to be interpreted afresh for each generation. What voices do you listen to when interpreting Scripture?
5. Li writes that Phoebe's message was "a tiny flame." Where is there hope in Phoebe's story?

—By Barb Draper

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## /// Readers write

### ✉ The value of solar power

**Re: “Avoiding an environmental shipwreck,” March 29, page 4.**

A few comments related to Tim Wiebe-Neufeld’s feature on reducing his carbon footprint by using solar panels.

Before people run out to buy solar panels in the rest of Canada, they should be aware that Alberta is one of the only places where doing this would result in a positive environmental outcome. The rest of Canada overwhelmingly uses non-emitting energy sources for electricity generation (82 percent for the country as a whole).

According to the Natural Resources Canada website (nrcan.gc.ca), Quebec is 98.9 percent non-emitting, with 93.9 percent generated by hydro power and 5 percent by wind power.

By my calculation, someone using solar power in Quebec, believing that they are improving the environment, would actually be generating almost four times the greenhouse gases during the lifecycle of the solar panels (created in the manufacturing process) than they would by just using the clean energy produced in the province.

This concept is true in most provinces in Canada. Ontario and British Columbia are 90.7 percent and 91.2 percent non-emitting, respectively.

So although Wiebe-Neufeld would improve the overall environmental situation in Alberta, I encourage others in Canada to do the research before using alternative power sources, such as solar and wind, solely to reduce greenhouse gases.

Living in Ontario, I myself have some small solar panels, but I am using them as a small source of backup power if the grid is down. I’m under no illusion that I am doing this to protect the environment.

HERMANN ENS (ONLINE COMMENT)

**The encouragement to consider the full costs of solar power fits well with the concept of researching the full costs of our actions.** I encourage consideration beyond a financial bottom line and seeking out ways to reduce negative impacts over the life of a product or activity.

Research shows that not only do solar and wind power emit far less carbon per kilowatt-hour than fossil fuels, they also emit far fewer greenhouse gases than sources like hydro electricity, if emissions from constructing dams are included. See the article, “Solar, wind and nuclear have ‘amazingly low’ carbon footprints, study finds” at [bit.ly/3twRviq](http://bit.ly/3twRviq).

TIM WIEBE-NEUFELD (ONLINE COMMENT)

### ✉ Mennonites urged to contact local officials to take climate-change action

**Re: “Avoiding an environmental shipwreck,” March 29, page 4.**

In response to Tim Wiebe-Neufeld’s Earth Day feature, I want to add my amen along with an emphatic “and.” Mennonites need to do all the things that Wiebe-Neufeld suggests and one more thing: We must call on our elected leaders to make systemic changes.

Mennonites, both individually and collectively, must be much more vocal with our elected leaders, who have the power to make fundamental changes to institutions and infrastructure, and bring about the rapid transformations required in these crucial years.

Wiebe-Neufeld notes that we “often find ourselves stuck between options that seem either too little to matter or too much to take on.” This is an elegant summary of a common quandary, but there are ways out of it that the author didn’t delve into.

Organizing thousands to march on Parliament Hill is not the only way to have real political impact. Municipal governments have authority over activities that account for 50 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. With their powers to influence transportation systems, land-use planning and building codes, our local governments are an excellent focus for advocacy efforts.

Reaching out to local elected officials is also easy. In my experience, local councillors reply personally within a week. Furthermore, local governments have their own advocacy networks, such as the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, which, in turn, put effective pressure for change on provincial and federal governments.

I encourage all readers to contact their local elected officials and ask for a meeting to discuss how your community can help to address the climate crisis. Organize with others in your congregation and community to meet as a delegation (Zoom works very well for this).

SCOTT MORTON NINOMIYA, KITCHENER, ONT.

*The writer attends St. Jacobs (Ont.) Mennonite Church.”*

### ✉ Author of Russian history chastises CM and letter writer

**Re: “Fascism by any other name” letter, March 29, page 7.**

We are surprised that *Canadian Mennonite* would publish a letter so filled with undocumented and defamatory statements. The writer of this diatribe is

to be encouraged to read some accurate Russian Mennonite history.

ANNE KONRAD, TORONTO

*The writer is the author of Red Quarter Moon: A Search for Family in the Shadow of Stalin (University of Toronto Press, 2012).*

### ✉ 'I am gladly getting my vaccination'

**Re: "Reader calls on Mennonites to reject COVID-19 vaccines" letter, April 12, page 7.**

I am deeply saddened—and even angered—to read the comment by Steve Martin.

I am gladly getting my vaccination, and so is my family and everyone I know. The risks of the vaccine are less than the risks of COVID-19, which has killed many.

I do love my neighbours and will do all I can to help keep them safe. This includes believing scientists and medical experts!

NANCY ELLEN NAFZIGER (ONLINE COMMENT)

### ✉ Another look at Mother's Day

**The traditional Mother's Day program did not take place in our church last year. Inwardly I was relieved. If motherhood is truly the ultimate fulfilment and happiness, why would God deny that to some? There had to be another answer.**

In my searching, God led me to a book by Kari Malcolm, a child of missionary parents who was raised in a tradition where serving the Lord was teamwork, where the mother was not accountable first to her husband but to God. In tracing the milieu of role models in society in *Women at the Crossroads*, Malcolm's treatment of Jesus and his relationship to women caused me to stop in my mental tracks. When a woman interrupted Jesus in the middle of his sermon in Luke 11:27, saying, "*Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that you sucked,*" Jesus' answer contains a truly revolutionary concept for the people who thought of women merely in terms of their biological potential: "*Yes, but even more blessed are all who hear the word of God and put it into practice.*"

I'm glad Paul was led to some unlikely women who would eventually be the core of the church, women like Lydia, Dorcas, Phoebe, Priscilla, Julia and the elect lady addressed in Second John.

As women today, we need to capitalize on the gift of extra time afforded us by the many household appliances that cut our work to a fraction of what it once was, and use the surplus hours to engage in

encouragement, intercession, counsel and evangelism, as well as the many other gifts listed in I Corinthians 12.

Although it behooves those in church leadership to discern the endowments in the Body of Christ and exhort them to "*stir up the gift*" that is in them, a willingness to serve the Lord finds its own expression if we are filled with the fullness of him who called us, and our hearts are fervent in love for others.

ELFRIEDA DICK, WINNIPEG

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## /// Milestones

### Deaths

**Ewert**—William F. (Bill), 77 (b. June 19, 1943; d. April 1, 2021), North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

**Friesen**—Anne (nee Friesen), 89 (b. Feb. 14, 1932; d. March 12, 2021), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Kliewer**—Ewald, 94 (b. Nov. 27, 1926; d. March 31, 2021), Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

**Regier**—Hildegard (Neufeld), 86 (b. June 4, 1934; d. March 13, 2021), Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

**Shantz**—Laura (nee Martin), 87 (b. June 10, 1933; d. March 15, 2021), Waterloo North Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

**Strom**—Jay Loren, 83 (b. Feb. 1, 1937; d. Oct. 23, 2020), Wanner Mennonite, Cambridge, Ont.

**Van Bergen**—Lena (nee Andres), 88 (b. Feb. 9, 1933; d. March 27, 2021), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

**Wiens**—Grace, 93 (b. March 4, 1928; d. March 15, 2021), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

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

## FROM OUR LEADERS

# Helping each other follow Jesus

Werner De Jong

**H**ow can we help each other to follow Jesus? I'm sure I'm not alone when I relate that my own journey of discipleship has sometimes felt more like a solo expedition than a corporate adventure. I have longed for more camaraderie on the road, to share with fellow disciples the questions, doubts, struggles, joys and responsibilities that attend the life of following Jesus.

While Mennonites value and emphasize the importance of community, we are not immune from the privatizing pressures of our individualistic culture. How can we engage our common pilgrimage in such a way that we become fruitful channels of God's grace in each other's lives, helping each other to grow in Christlikeness?

I've grown to appreciate the baptismal vow that is unique to Anabaptists. The Mennonite *Minister's Manual* phrases it like this: "Are you willing to give and receive counsel in the congregation?" Upon our baptisms, we pledge to engage in the communal journey of discipleship, recognizing our dependence on one another.

This has deep historic roots. The early Anabaptists, dismayed at the lack of

maturity they perceived in the state churches, committed themselves to mutual accountability, in the belief that they needed each other, to bear fruit. In this, they had significant initial success. In many locations, witnesses—including their opponents—testified to their neighbourly love and upright living. But mutual accountability deteriorated into legalism over time, becoming punitive rather than supportive.

Strict Mennonite discipline became a cautionary tale, to the point that today we are hesitant to speak into each other's lives. But individualized discipleship is also not healthy. Alone, how can we resist being co-opted by societal values that run counter to kingdom values?

There is no single or easy answer to the question of how to engage in gracious mutual dependence, but I have had two positive experiences:

- **A few years ago**, a small group in my congregation experimented with keeping a simple covenant, in which each member agreed to three daily practices: having an intentional prayer time, engaging with the Scriptures and witnessing to God's love. At the outset,

we discussed the dangers of legalism and judgmentalism, and we agreed that any punitive element would be counter-productive. As we gathered bi-weekly, we shared stories of success and failure in keeping the covenant, talked about how we experienced Jesus, or not, at work in our lives, and we advised and prayed for one another.

- **I currently participate** in a prayer group that has been meeting four times a week online for the last 10 months, using the Anabaptist prayer book/app *Take Our Moments and Our Days*. Whether or not I feel like praying, and whether or not my prayers feel warm or cold, I receive encouragement in knowing that I am not praying alone, but I am part of a supportive community which is committed to praying together.

In what other ways can we offer gracious support to each other as we participate in the adventure of following Jesus together? ❧



Werner De Jong is senior pastor of Holyrood Mennonite Church in Edmonton.

## A moment from yesterday



**A baptismal group from the 1970s at Clearbrook Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C. Baptism was an important event in the life of an individual and the church, and people dressed for the occasion. Baptism was often done in the spring around the Easter season. Standing in the very back is minister Jake Tilitzky, but who are the young men and women in front of him? Can you help identify these people?**

Text: Conrad Stoesz

Photo: Der Bote Photograph Collection / Mennonite Heritage Archives



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 THE CHURCH HERE AND THERE
 

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# 'I shall not be moved'

Arli Klassen

**S**trong, hopeful and resilient. Are those words that describe you today, after a year of pandemic restrictions, with all the predictions of doom in regards to climate change, and ongoing evidence of systemic and individual racism directed against people of many colours in Canada? Are these words that you use to describe church in light of the pandemic, climate change and racism?

My husband Keith Regehr and I have been watching a PBS documentary called *The Black Church*. We were unable to stream it across the border when it was first shown, and now we are watching it via our local library. Host Henry Louis Gates Jr. repeats the idea many times that it is the Black church that provided strength, courage, hope and resilience to the entire Black community over many generations of oppression in the U.S. The community. The preaching. The music. Civil rights would not have been possible without the church. The documentary is an astounding witness to the power of the gospel through the church, from the years of enslavement through the Civil War to today.

Is that how you think about the church? That we would be unable to

individually face the struggles in our individual lives, or that together we could not influence wider society except through the church?

The Black church was a minority movement. Historically its members did not hold political power. It was, and is, divided by economic class, the rural/urban divide and other cultural divisions that impact all churches. And yet it provided the strength, hope and resilience for Black church members to bring social change to the world around them.

As we move into a post-Christendom world in Canada (and in the U.S.), we move into a pluralistic world where Christians do not hold majority power in politics or in other ways. Some are mourning those losses. The white church is also a minority voice in our society.

But the lesson I take from the Black church is that not having political power does not lessen the church's role in society or its influence on its members.

Over this past year I have been astonished at how many weeks Keith and I came to Zoom worship with our congregation feeling discouraged and lonely. And every week our spirits are lifted, even without singing together.

Gathering for worship, or with our small group, gives us courage that God is present to us in ways that are not possible by ourselves. We have a community to which we belong, and encountering God together as a community of disciples of Jesus gives us strength. I hope this is also your experience.

I am wary of triumphant claims of God's complete victory over sin, claims that don't seem to consider the destruction of this earth by humankind or the oppression of one people group by another. I want to enter into worship acknowledging these concerns, my fears and suffering. I also want to enter into worship knowing I will be strengthened by the resilience and hope of our faith community. Like the truths that Black church leaders share in this documentary, I am reminded again that it is the church, the community of God's people together, that gives us the strength, hope and resilience to face the individual struggles in our own lives, as well as the systemic struggles in our world.

"Though all hell assail me, I shall not be moved / Jesus will not fail me, I shall not be moved. / Just like a tree that's planted by the waters / I shall not be moved." (*Spirituals Triumphant Old and New*, Edward Boatner, 1927.)



*Arli Klassen is a member of First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont., and can be reached at [klassenarli@gmail.com](mailto:klassenarli@gmail.com).*

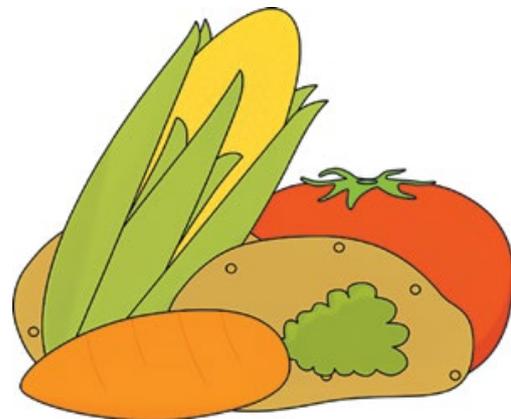
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## Et cetera

### Southwestern Ontario Gleaners remains open

When the Ontario government issued a stay-at-home order on April 8, Southwestern Ontario Gleaners decided to remain open as an essential food-processing company. The interdenominational charity provides dehydrated vegetable mixes and dehydrated fruit snacks to local partners and relief agencies around the world. To ensure the safety of volunteers, the number of people per shift has been reduced to 10. The plant was closed in December 2020 during the last provincial lockdown and only reopened in March. Demand for the product remains high.

Source: Southwestern Ontario Gleaners / Clip art from Clipart Panda



## LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

# Are you okay with okay?

Troy Watson

It's been a while since you dared listen to the whispers of your innermost being, calling you to discover who you truly, fully are. That inner voice suggesting there is a power at work within you capable of doing far greater things than you could ever hope for or imagine.

But hope is a dangerous thing. It too often leads to disappointment and despair, and you've suffered enough. Better to accept the mediocrity of existence and

Have you grown weary or afraid of the mystery of your own life? Have your assumptions about who you are, have been and will be, become a prison? A cage that is unlocked but a cage still?

Those spiritual "highs" belong to the less mature. You are okay with being okay now. A desire for more feels selfish, greedy, childish. As an adult you must put away childish things. There is work to be done. Pay the bills, save up for retirement to maintain this little

Occasionally, the pain of searing loss breaks through the surface to reveal the rich soil of your inner being, longing to give birth to something new, something true, something more.

Oh, that troublesome inner child remembering you were meant for more. It's best to drown out the meddlesome muse. Numb this momentary sensitivity to the expansive movement of the Spirit within. You are okay with being okay.

Sure, in the past you glimpsed the unspeakable beauty of God. You tasted divine abundance for a season. Who knows why such things don't last?

Yet to embark on a pursuit of divine abundance now would be reckless. You've lost your appetite for the unknown. Only a fool would step into darkness at this stage of life and go against the grain, letting go of everything you know and have built for yourself. Who needs such risk at your age? You have so much already. You have so much to lose. Is that it? Is it fear of loss that steers your ship now?

Awake, sleeper! Arise. Dare to seek more and be the fool. There is no harm in bringing laughter to others, even if it's directed at you. You are not called to be okay. You are called to burn with the fire of heaven and overflow with the wine of the Spirit. Of course, you don't know the way. You cannot know the way, but you were never meant to travel alone. Let's leap together. ☼

## Sure, in the past you glimpsed the unspeakable beauty of God. You tasted divine abundance for a season. Who knows why such things don't last?

relinquish the desire for more.

After all, you're doing okay.

Yet this nagging question resurfaces without warning, in a moment of inspiration or unbridled curiosity. "What if there's more?" A pang of desire to pursue something impractical, impossible even, leaps within you like John leapt in Elizabeth's womb in the presence of the unborn Christ.

But you've been down that road before. It's not worth it. Best to keep your head down and your nose to the grindstone. Maintain what you already have. Stay on your current path even though its destination feels far removed from the promised land Christ pointed you towards years ago.

Remember when your cup overflowed? When you danced because you couldn't contain the music inside of you? When your laughter emptied your eyes of their tears? When you lost your "self" in the moment so completely that time no longer obeyed the laws of physics in the vast universe of your own soul?

kingdom you've built, consisting of a little slice of earth and some stuff to call your own. It's silly to dream of more. To dream differently. As if spending the majority of your time and energy to maintain your "white-picket-fence" existence isn't silly. As if you and your empire of dust won't soon return to dust.

But as long as your hurried pace continues, and stillness, silence and spaciousness are kept at bay, you won't question the point of all your busyness. This hurried pace of productivity and possessions is the way. Others with far more "wisdom" and "success" than you have followed this way for centuries. Who are you to question it?

Yet in those rare moments of presence, when time seems to stand still, echoes of eternity reveal a canyon of emptiness within. For a fleeting moment, as you observe a flickering bonfire, the falling rain or the wind whistling through trees, your eyes are opened to see the hollow facade you have mistaken for substance.



*Troy Watson woke up with this message and assumed it was for someone. Probably himself.*

## VIEWPOINT

# Welcoming spaces for all

Jeanne Davies

**W**hen I was a pastor, I learned we had a few young people with autism in our youth group. In order to begin creating an environment that felt more comfortable, I provided a big basket of “fidgets” on the table in the centre of the room. I expected that youth with autism would use them to help reduce anxiety and increase focus. What I didn’t expect was that everybody in the room would enjoy using them.

At our national youth conference, I created a sensory room so anyone who felt overwhelmed by the crowds, the social demands and the stimulus of the conference could take a break and colour, do prayer activities, work on a puzzle or simply rest in a room that was quiet with low, warm lighting. A diverse group of people made use of that room. One exhausted conference leader simply came in to lie on the floor with some pillows and take a nap.

It turns out that when we make spaces more welcoming and nurturing for people with disabilities, we make spaces that are

more welcoming and nurturing for all.

In order to create welcoming, comfortable environments, we must create spaces that are trauma-informed. People with disabilities experience a high incidence of trauma. And trauma itself can cause impairment or disability. We now know that the prevalence of trauma generally in our communities is much higher than we would have believed it to be. We all need trauma-informed communities, and our faith communities are no exception.

Communities of faith have therefore been slow to make the changes that would make their facilities more accessible to people with disabilities. This includes some basic physical accommodations such as wheelchair ramps, automatic doors, accessible bathrooms, and elevators. But it also includes making accommodations for those with intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental illness or other disabilities that create barriers to full participation in the life of faith communities.

Religious organizations should be leading in the effort to create communities that include people with diverse impairments and abilities. Who are we excluding from community? We often do this passively by simply not providing the supports they need for access—whether those are physical, social, emotional or relational. It’s good for us to examine our own communities and ask ourselves who isn’t there and why they might not be present. Have we unwittingly created barriers that prevent them from full participation?

Access and inclusion are not enough. What people with disabilities need is a place where they belong. In “A place of belonging: Including individuals with significant disabilities in faith communities,”

Erik W. Carter writes: “Belonging is rooted in relationships. Having people in our lives who know us, like us, accept us, need us, miss us and love us is at the heart of our well-being. The same is true for individuals with significant disabilities. Their need for friendships and other supportive peer relationships is a universal need, one grounded in the core belief that humans were created for community.”

When we create communities in which people with disabilities belong, we are likely creating communities that feel more welcoming to all people. As Carter writes, “Belonging is not a special need, it is a universal need.”

Part of belonging and fully participating in a faith community is the affirmation and the employment of spiritual gifts. The gifts of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities often are unrecognized and under-employed. When we do not embrace the spiritual gifts of those who are disabled, it is not only people with disabilities who suffer. The whole community suffers because of the lack of their participation and contribution. The community of faith can be a primary place where the gifts of those with disabilities are appreciated and help us all grow spiritually.

We at the Anabaptist Disabilities Network work to connect with and support people who have disabilities, families and faith communities to create a culture of belonging for everybody. We believe that faith communities are transformed when individuals with disabilities and their God-given gifts and experiences enjoy full inclusion.

May we all learn together and encourage one another as we create faith communities of healing that embrace everybody, especially those who have been left out or left behind. ✎

*Jeanne Davies is executive director of the Anabaptist Disabilities Network ([anabaptistdisabilitiesnetwork.org](http://anabaptistdisabilitiesnetwork.org)). This article is adapted from a piece she wrote for the Center for Faith and Community Health Transformation. Reprinted by permission of the author.*



CLEARING A PATH FOR EVERYONE!

Reprinted with permission of Michael F. Giangreco. Originally published in *Absurdities and Realities of Special Education: The best of ants..., flying..., and logs, full-colour edition, Corwin.*

## VIEWPOINT

# 'Ussing' and 'themming'

Ken Shultz

“U” is an English word associated with family, friends, the church and school we attend, the clubs we go to, the sports teams we play with—groups that more often than not are associated with good things, good times, good memories and more. It may also include groups that we belong to, such as our ancestors, the schools we went to, political parties and more.

Similarly, “them” is an English word universally understood to mean others, and it too is learned early. Usually it is associated with people we don’t know: perhaps neighbours we haven’t yet met or haven’t taken the time to get to know; or those who live elsewhere, beyond our neighbourhood, in other towns, cities, provinces or countries. It is also a word that we associate with groups that we do not belong to or that we are not familiar with, including people who are just different from us physically and mentally. And it is strongly associated with bad people: criminals, and others considered undesirable or even evil.

Generally those we like, we think of as being “us.” And those we do not like or know, or those we fear, we think of as being “them.”

So why are there no simple English words to characterize this kind of thinking and acting? What do we call the action that occurs when we act together, synergistically, for the common good. It is a synonym for the Christian concept of “love”. Why not use “ussing”?

On the other hand, what do we call the action that occurs when we act independently or collectively for our own selfish purpose whether or not we consider the negative impact on others? Why not use “themming”?

The usefulness of this concept in a social context becomes particularly apparent when an unconscious result of

an action suddenly becomes evident. Think of the negative impact of racism and privilege; the result of labelling an action as “politically correct” instead of calling it a “social error”; or the impact of groups or “silos” of people acting together, like street gangs, hazing or other initiation ceremonies with harmful consequences. Or even politics in the context of the increasing divide between the poor and the wealthy.

“Ussing” and “themming” can be a concept leading to a door opening to understanding of where or how these results originate. Or even an “aha” moment if the insight is sudden and revealing.

There are many examples of “ussing” and “themming” arising from the actions of people in the world around us that we take for granted. We accept the consequences because they have existed as part of our environment for so long that we just accept those consequences unconsciously or we perceive that we can do nothing about them. Democracy and socialism are examples of “ussing.” Dictatorships and communism, as practised, are examples of “themming.” Social classes like the caste system in India is a form of “themming,” which prevents or ignores the potential synergism of individuals outside of silos.

As an exercise, think about the Seven Deadly Sins. All of them are “themming” because the actions are done without regard to the impact of the action on the lives of others.

On Feb. 7, Pastor Gordon Allaby spoke at Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Waterloo, Ont., about Jesus healing people of their demons, in Mark 1:29-39. Until then, I had thought of demonic possession as if it were a physical possession, like some entity being present or like a bacteria causing illness.

He explained that spirituality was not

physical, but that it was the action of God in us, and that the action of the devil in us was also spiritual. The latter leads us to the Seven Deadly Sins and other societal problems, such as prejudice or racism: they are just not spoken of in these terms.

The inference of this gospel passage is that God’s presence in us can instantly heal us from the devil’s spirituality when we realize the truth Jesus proclaimed. The new verbs are another way of expressing these actions: “ussing” is God’s action in us (it is also called love); and “themming” is the devil’s action leading to sin and other negative outcomes.

Think about prejudice and racism. Do they not occur as a result of “themming”?

Think about criticism; when it is positive, it is “ussing” and it usually produces positive results; otherwise, it is “themming,” and it can provoke many negative reactions, including anger.

If used as a filter in this way, the unintended consequences of an action or the unconscious impact of a word can become evident.

Had these verbs existed while I was experiencing puberty I would not have experienced a time of confusion about what sex and love are; why virginity at marriage is important; whether or not I should ignore the teachings of my parents and my church, or seek sex like my buddies were doing.

The words “romance” and “romantic love” as used in English can be seen as “ussing” when it is healthy and as “themming” when it is driven by lust. Think about the difference. Love is “ussing,” whereas sex under the guise of love is “themming.” ❧

*Ken Shultz attends Waterloo North Mennonite Church.*

## FRONT COVER VIEWPOINT

## Digging into diet

Theo Wiederkehr

**M**y family farms, raising plants and animals on a small scale—40 hens, five cows, two sows—both to feed ourselves and as a source of income. So I read with great interest “What would Jesus think about factory farms?” a critique and encouragement to move towards a vegan diet by Sandy and Jason Yuen, on page 12 of the March 29 issue.

I have deep doubts regarding the sustainability of agriculture and our society. Some of these doubts come out of my own experience raising animals. In my family’s farming, we have deliberately tried to address the animal-welfare concerns around factory farms.

Our animals all have access to the outdoors all summer, with most living entirely on pasture land while the grass is growing. Our cows’ calves are not snatched from them at birth; instead, we leave them with their mothers full-time for the first month and then share the milk supply, with us taking half and the calf taking half, for months after that.

But economic problems remain. Although we spend a lot of time and effort caring for our land and its creatures, farming on our scale is not profitable, and my father works another job full-time to support our family’s modest lifestyle. From our experience, it seems that consumers will not pay enough to make small-scale, careful, food raising a realistic career.

Factory farming is one way that some farmers have attempted to solve this problem and, based on our experience, we understand why they might move in that direction. But factory farming does massive harm to the environment and, even in our own careful farming, some of its ecological problems remain. Chief among these are two problems:

- **Whenever we sell** food, we lose nutrients from our land, which must be



PHOTOS BY THEO WIEDERKEHR

*Muscovy ducks dabble in one of their favourite mud puddles in the Wiederkehrs’ barnyard. They are kept for eggs, meat, fly control and because they are fun to have around.*

replaced directly with fertilizers or indirectly with purchased feed.

- **Our farming is** deeply reliant on the use of a fossil-fuel-burning tractor, car and truck.

Both of these problems have led us to believe that our farming—and all agriculture that feeds people who live far from the farm—is unsustainable. However, I don’t believe that veganism or vegetarianism are tidy solutions to the problems in how we grow food and eat it.

Vegetarianism for environmental or animal welfare reasons makes little sense. Both dairy and eggs are produced only by female animals, which means that half the population of dairy cattle and egg-laying chickens—the males—must be eliminated somewhere, as well as the elderly, unhealthy or unproductive females. Producing dairy and eggs produces a lot of meat as an inevitable byproduct.

Veganism seems like a more logical way of addressing the problems of

careful resource use and animal welfare. But, when viewed only from a consumer’s perspective, it misses several things that I have observed from my producer’s perspective.

Eating only plant foods does not eliminate animal suffering. Last year, I was preparing soil for planting dry beans by hoeing it. I was happily working when I was suddenly interrupted by the ground writhing under



*Homegrown potatoes, carrots, beets, kale and cheese—all important parts of a local winter diet—are stored in the Wiederkehrs’ root cellar.*

my hoe. I had accidentally struck a little red-bellied snake that had been hidden from my view as it hunted its prey underground.

Of course, this sort of thing happens hundreds or thousands of times while farmers work their fields. Plant-based diets do not eliminate suffering, although they may make it less intentional and visible.

But I have a second difficulty with veganism. I don't see a way to live a vegan life, as a Canadian, without relying on non-renewable resources. Tractors, combines and trucks all depend on fossil fuels to operate, and therefore cannot be part of a food system that cares for creation, if we take anthropogenic climate change seriously.

I heartily agree with the Yuens that factory farms are an immoral way to work with animals, and that we need to make personal changes to the way we live to address the wrongs that we are aware of.

But I think that shifting where we buy food—or what foods we eat—can simply obscure our sins more, as in my story with the snake. Instead, I believe that, when and wherever possible, we should take off our boots and dig our toes into the actual soil that feeds us.

Learn to garden, if you can find anywhere to do so. But don't just grow tomatoes and lettuce; learn to grow the crops that are your staples, and which farmers grow in big fields. Raise animals, if you can, even if it's only a couple of hens.

Even if those projects are beyond your abilities or resources, consider how all the food you eat is grown, and try to trace it back through the people who work with it, to the land. If possible, get to know your farmers, and search for ways to partner with them, to make it more possible for them to take the time and care to raise food in a thoughtful, loving, Christian way. ❧

*Theo Wiederkehr is a 24-year-old farmer who often feels that he is just beginning to learn how to work with other creatures. He is part of Hanover (Ont.) Mennonite Church.*



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## NEWS

# Churches weigh in on bill to ban conversion therapy

By Will Braun  
Senior Writer

A proposed federal law to criminalize conversion therapy is creating controversy, not because anyone is openly defending the practice of seeking to convert LGBTQ+ people to heterosexuality, but because some fear Bill C-6 will extend beyond its stated target.

Among the concerned is the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), of which Mennonite Church Canada is a member.

Julia Beazley, EFC's director of public policy, said in a written response that "this has been a deeply challenging policy issue to navigate" because the bill is "an effort to protect and support people" but is framed in such a way that "risks infringing on religious freedom."

The EFC—an umbrella organization that "provides a forum" for four million Christians—is unequivocal on conversion therapy itself: "While we have serious concerns with how the bill is worded, we are supportive of the stated objective of Bill C-6, which is to protect Canadians from the damaging effects of practices that have been widely discredited."

"We need to acknowledge that some of the ways we in the church have tried to help, may, in fact, have hurt," Beazley says. In her conversations and outreach on this issue, she says she came across no supporters of conversion therapy.

The question is not whether it is acceptable. Results are often disastrous. Conservative MP Michelle Rempel Garner—a passionate supporter of LGBTQ+ rights—noted a study that found 30 percent of people who underwent conversion therapy later attempted suicide.

The rub is the bill's definition of conversion therapy, which it deems "a practice, treatment or service designed to change a person's sexual orientation to heterosexual, to change a person's gender identity or gender expression to cisgender, or to repress or reduce non-heterosexual

The screenshot shows the website of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC). The header includes the EFC logo, a search bar, and navigation links for Topics, Communications, Get involved, Affiliation, Resources, and About us. The main content area features a large image of the Parliament Hill building in Ottawa. Below the image is the title "Bill C-6 to Ban Conversion Therapy" and a date of "06 October 2020". The article text begins with "The Justice Minister introduced a bill to ban conversion therapy on October 1, 2020. Bill C-6 is a reintroduction of a previous bill to ban conversion therapy (former Bill C-5) that died when Parliament was prorogued in August 2020. The bill has all of the same provisions, but has been assigned a new number in the new session of Parliament." A small caption below the article reads: "Bill C-6 would create new criminal offences relating to conversion therapy. In Bill C-6, conversion therapy is defined

attraction or sexual behaviour or non-cisgender gender expression."

The concern is that a parent or church leader presenting the traditional Christian teachings on sexuality—an act protected under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms—could be captured in the bill's broad definition.

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops has expressed concern that, "[t]he bill could even criminalize Catholic ministries and groups, religious leaders, or pastors who encourage individuals with same-sex attraction to live chastely."

When introducing the bill on March 9, 2020, Justice Minister David Lametti said: "These new offences would not criminalize private conversations in which personal views on sexual orientation, sexual feelings or gender identity are expressed, such as where teachers, school counsellors, pastoral counsellors, faith leaders, doctors, mental-health professionals, friends or family members provide support to

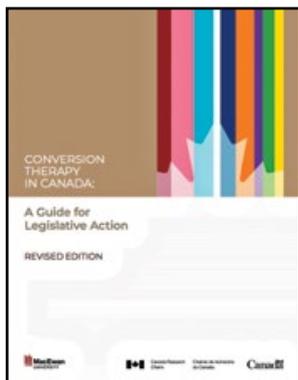
persons struggling with their sexual orientation, sexual feelings or gender identity."

Richard Marceau is among many who suggest including this wording in the bill. Marceau is vice-president of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, and, in his own words, "a strong proponent of full equality for LGBTQ2+ people." He was also an MP when parliament debated same-sex marriage.

At that time, he suggested an amendment to the marriage bill that protected the Charter rights of those who did not believe in same-sex marriage, without changing the substance of the bill. The amendment is now law.

As he said of that amendment in a submission to the Standing Committee considering Bill C-6 last November, "This amendment, coming from one of the defenders of equal marriage, allowed a measure of clarity and assuaged fears that had been expressed."

He believes the Standing Committee



## New podcast explores current topics through Anabaptist lens

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe  
Manitoba Correspondent  
WINNIPEG

When COVID-19 halted post-church foyer conversations, two Mennonites decided to keep them alive through a podcast. The hosts, Rafael Duerksen and Tobian Penner, launched the first episode of *Modern Anabaptist: The Conversations that Shape Us* on Feb. 17.



Rafael Duerksen



Tobian Penner

should likewise add a simple clarification to Bill C-6.

If a case came to court, a judge would consider only the law itself, not related comments by MPs.

On Dec. 10, 2020, the Standing Committee voted instead to expand, rather than clarify, the definition of conversion therapy by adding “gender expression.”

The EFC is concerned the legislation could “have a significant chilling effect” among churches and church organizations.

A spokesperson from No Conversion Canada—a coalition that includes conversion therapy survivors—did not reply to a request for comment by press time. In an appearance before the Standing Committee, No Conversion Canada representatives noted that seven provinces or territories and 14 municipal governments—including Vancouver and Calgary—have legislation related to conversion therapy. They said there is no evidence of a chill effect, although they may not be best positioned to detect it.

While many LGBTQ+ advocates bristle at one-man/one-woman Christian teachings, the fact that evangelicals are broadly condemning conversion therapy is evidence of a change in the landscape over the last couple decades. Beazley acknowledges such a shift, noting it is a “shift in posture,” not beliefs.

There appears to be much more talk of genuinely, gently walking with people. While this will be inadequate for many LGBTQ+ advocates, the shift may be doing as much to further marginalize conversion therapy as a new law.

At press time, the bill was on the verge of passing third reading in the House of Commons and heading to the Senate. ☞

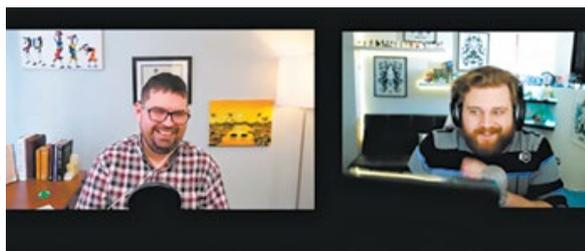
Duerksen, the lead pastor at Springfield Heights Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, and Penner, a graduate student studying counselling psychology, who attends the same church, regularly spent hours in lively debate and discussion and, after a while, realized there might be value in inviting a larger community into these conversations.

The podcast currently releases new episodes roughly every week. It follows a conversational format, exploring current topics in light of Anabaptist faith.

“We’re trying to keep this at an intellectual level, but an everyday applied

says Penner. But with only a handful of Anabaptist podcasts in existence, *Modern Anabaptist* speaks to a need waiting to be filled.

“We’re hoping to start conversations in the church,” says Penner. “Because I know that, depending what church you go to, there’s a wide ranging of beliefs and openness to talk about some of the stuff we talk about.”



**Screenshot of Rafael Duerksen and Tobian Penner, who have been recording their Modern Anabaptist podcast virtually during the pandemic.**

intellectualism,” says Penner.

So far, *Modern Anabaptist* has explored topics like suicide and death, biblical archaeology, and the monarchy and generational trauma, among others. They have also interviewed guests like Doug Klassen, executive minister of Mennonite Church Canada.

Podcasts are skyrocketing in popularity during the pandemic, so it is easy to get lost in the sheer number of options,

The hosts are bubbling with episode ideas for the coming year, like interviewing an Anabaptist from outside a traditional peace church, and exploring why Anabaptism has started to become more popular in the broader world. They want to learn about the difference between empathy and compassion, talk with psychologists and authors, and collaborate with another faith-based podcast.

“In the end, we just want to do something that we enjoy. And if other people enjoy it with us, then we’re happy,” says Duerksen. ☞

To listen to *Modern Anabaptist*, visit [modernanabaptist.ca](http://modernanabaptist.ca) or check it out on podcast platforms like Apple, Spotify and Stitcher. To suggest episode topics, email [conversationsthatshapeus@gmail.com](mailto:conversationsthatshapeus@gmail.com).



# CM awarded six CCCA certificates

Second year for virtual awards ceremony and annual conference due to COVID-19

Canadian Mennonite  
WATERLOO, ONT.

The Canadian Christian Communicators Association again took to Zoom for its sophomore Awards of Merit ceremony, held on April 7. A total of 20 Canadian magazines, newspapers and communications organizations entered the competition for material published in print or posted online in 2020. *Canadian Mennonite* received two awards for writing, three for layout and design, and one for general excellence for a magazine.

## First-place entries

### Editorial

#### What lingers in the air

Virginia A. Hostetler  
Executive Editor



At the end of May and into June, as news reports continued on demonstrations in cities across North America, we witnessed something more powerful than fire burning in the streets. Demonstrators were angry at recent events in which individuals had expressed their views on the death of George Floyd. But the issue of the deaths of the Black men in Minneapolis and the North American way of life. While there were some "bad actors" taking advantage of the protests for their own purposes, many demonstrators were expressing something more elemental. "Where was the justice that they were entitled to as members of a democratic society? Why were these human beings being treated—killed and injured? Breathing in the air was the feeling of grief, along with a profound sense of betrayal. And I am sure people everywhere that we are not like the biggest carrying symbols of hatred and cheating while someone else struggles. But we live in a racist society and we benefit from the way our world is structured—favoring some and discriminating against others—simply because of skin color. "The truth is that while racism doesn't exist only in the USA, the progress of the past," writes Drew G. I. Hart, author of *COVID-19: How Changing the Way Our Church Views Racism* (Sheffield Press, 2020). "Racism, it is to be sure within the air of almost every culture, in which

racism, and often unconscious ways. The acknowledgment that racism exists in our society is a full of more people. I don't question the fact that more white people are extremely nice but I don't believe that most are accidental but participants in a white dominant culture that has become adapted to white supremacy and racial marginalization." Although Hart writes as an African American in the U.S. context, much of the message is relevant to Christians in Canada as well. He encourages those of us in the church to take a hard look at our presuppositions, our policies, and our ways of acting that perpetuate injustice and cause trauma for the people of color. We must acknowledge the destruction that racism engenders. Racial concepts contradict the good news of the gospel. Racism is not a neutral position; most recognize the ways in which our privileges have come at the cost of our sisters and brothers, though. Bartlett, author of *Becoming an Antiracist Church* (Dorland, 2019), writes, "Racism is not just a set of things which must be argued but also an embedded how we think and act." Indigenous speaker and author Kristin Curtis, in a 2018 *Spectrum* article, "As white Christians, we must recognize that we have been at the hands of the church for generations, and our traumas must be recognized by the

institutional church to find a path to continued healing." As we sense what lingers in the air, we can explore new ways of living with each other in this time. "It seems toward racial reconciliation," Mennonite author April Thomas suggests a few specific actions we can take. Start with listening, she writes, which can be a form of active engagement. Instead of assuming you already know, take on a posture of listening. "The acknowledgment that there is hard work ahead." In the work of racial reconciliation, we need grace and encouragement to know when to be silent and simple before when to speak up, and how to do that without speaking over, how to act in partnership instead of ignoring or leading it over one another; how to be open to the possibility and the difficulty of Scripture, to be led by God and sustained by the Spirit." Canadian author, theologian, and pastor suggests, "I find the ways that you can support these struggles in your own communities... You don't have to go anywhere else to make a change, you don't have to even be standing on the street waving a placard to make change-supporting black people and black struggles in their own community in the way you can all find a difference." The pain of racism lingers in the air we breathe. How will the Canadian Mennonite church respond?

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#### A spiritual disruption

Joshua Penfold

In this final chapter of *Heaven*, God bids the brethren return to God and acknowledge their wrongdoings. Just as he has assured they will find community and grace in the life of the church, so he has assured they will find grace in the life of the church. It really isn't a simple theme, but I think it is a beautiful story to help the awakened and the awakened. Can we witness to God for various reasons? Could it be a slow and gradual transformation? Can it be the result of a new vision for our personal spiritual practices? For the first few months of 2020, I've developed a quiet regular routine of reading my Bible, journaling, and praying. From out of this routine, each week someone in my house would be off to work and school, which would affect how much I could read and pray. I had to find a way to work around it. It had become my little time of sanctuary, my only time when I could be with myself and God. These life changes have put my life, but the whole world. We were all held to a routine and we suddenly had ourselves in a lock one day while in a quiet time. I had been thinking in my Bible reading, my reflective writing, and praying. The center became clear to me

Ed lost my routine. That sacred space that had been carved into my schedule had dissolved as life had shifted. Suddenly, my children were home all day and my wife was working from home and before long I also had to put a pause on my regular work. We were all learning to adjust to a new temporary normal, and through it all I am still trying to figure out how best to develop a new routine for my personal spiritual practices. Maybe it's a stretch to compare my situation to the wilderness of the Israelites. Their situation was to return to God in quite different than my waywardness of personal devotion. Perhaps that perhaps they both share the same mystery: On the work of figuring out how you're going to adjust your life so that you're aligned with God, again. Reflecting on my life, I realize that this is certainly not the first time I have encountered change in routine that has disrupted my spiritual practices, and I'm sure it will not be the last. I still suffer with feelings on times when I feel that I had established spiritual routines that were consistent and

meaningful. Each time life changes, I am given an opportunity to take stock of my present situation and explore my desire in the hope of finding space for meaningful connection with God in this chapter of life. Routine spiritual practices don't happen spontaneously; they require intention and deliberate practice. They will blossom only when tended to with regular care and given time to take root. I feel I must be gentle with myself, acknowledging that a thriving spiritual connection will flourish as well as self-governance, but as the brethren were invited to return to God after their comparatively induced isolation, God continues to bring us back to us, to return to being rooted in God. I will be grateful for the time I have spent in prayer, for my eyes have turned away from them. I will be glad to do as I can, for will always be a joy" (Heaven 14:4-5).



Joshua Penfold (penfoldmennonite@gmail.com) is a support worker and a member of Rockwood (C.M.) Mennonite Church.

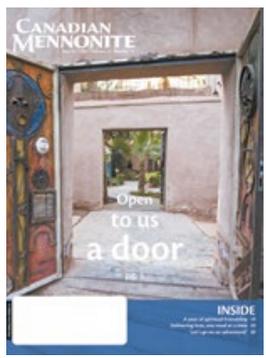
#### Joint peace message laments start of the Korean War

A joint ecumenical peace message for the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the start of the Korean War was publicly delivered on June 12 during a livestreamed event. Co-sponsors include the Council of Churches in Canada and the Mennonite Central Committee Canada, especially from countries that participated in the Korean War, the ecumenical dialogue center." Other which is peace treaty was over concluded. The message also calls for suspension and cancellation of any further military exercises in the region. Following the public presentation of the peace message, the Statement of Intent for Peace, Reconciliation and Dialogue in the Korean Peninsula was also presented and signed on common documents in the region. Source: World Council of Churches. Photos by Catherine de Frenck.



The document was signed by the two churches.

inventive and exciting, and perfect for the text. And, well, it's fun and full of delight. While more conservative in its use of typography, it brings to mind the work of Sister Corita (corita.org). . . . This cover has a beautiful feeling of joy, inventiveness and openness. This is really well done."



- **Column, magazine.** Joshua Penfold, author (*Tales from the Unending Story*: "Smudged with humanity," April 13, page 12; "An intentionally inconsistent cat," June 8, page 12; "A spiritual disruption," Sept. 14, page 14.) Judge's comment: "The author presents beautifully distilled 'soundbites' of complex issues in the life of faith; they are both readable and striking. His treatment of the paradoxes of Scripture and faith is thoughtful and helpful without creating a false solution . . . . This seems especially important to a younger generation of readers struggling with seeming inconsistencies. . . . The writing is descriptive . . . and the tone is honest. Thank you for gifting your readership with timely and thoughtful insights so well expressed in writing."
- **Front Cover, magazine, circulation under 10,000.** Ross W. Muir, designer; Jane Grunau, photographer ("Open to us a door," May 25, page 1.) Judge's comment: "The typography, and its interactions with the photograph, is

- **Feature Layout and Design, magazine, circulation under 10,000.** Ross W. Muir, designer; Jane Grunau, photographer ("Open to us a door," May 25, pages 1, 4-7, 40.) Judge's comment: "This is an inventive solution to a timely subject, but one that might seem to resist apt summation in an image. The layout sets up an idea that is at once literal and poetic. Through repetition we get to roll the ideas packed into the verse in our minds as we read the piece, creating a deeper, more profound understanding in the process. The opening typography is very effective. . . . An excellent example of visual thinking serving not as decoration, but as an equal partner, one which can harmonize with the verbal in a way that makes them both richer."
- **Second-place entry**
  - **Photo Essay, magazine, circulation under 10,000.** Betty Avery, designer; Margaret Gissing, photographer ("Nonsense cooks up laughs



- **Editorial, magazine.** Virginia A. Hostetler, author ("What lingers in the air," June 8, page 2.) Judge's comment: "Well-argued stand, with a lot of backup, and a way forward presented. A good opinion piece that takes a difficult stand on an issue relevant to the readership, sparking debate in multiple issues of the magazine's Letters section, a forum for the readership to engage in dialogue on social issues. Clearly hit its mark."

for Grebel audiences,” March 30, pages 22-23.)

Judge’s comment: “I really enjoyed this entry. It drew me in, made me smile, and I found myself wanting to read the article and laugh, so refreshing in these troubled times. I was very impressed at how [the photographer] managed to photograph black on black; this is a very difficult thing to do. . . . Congratulations on a fine entry.”

“Intelligent editorial hands are at work here. One article re-examines racist complicity within the ranks. Another probes the congregational uses of intellectual property. A feature on three churches that withdrew from the denomination is reported charitably. Appropriate for a denomination known for its sense of community there’s an interactive ‘For discussion’ feature and a robust Letters section that reflects an uncommon degree of erudition.”

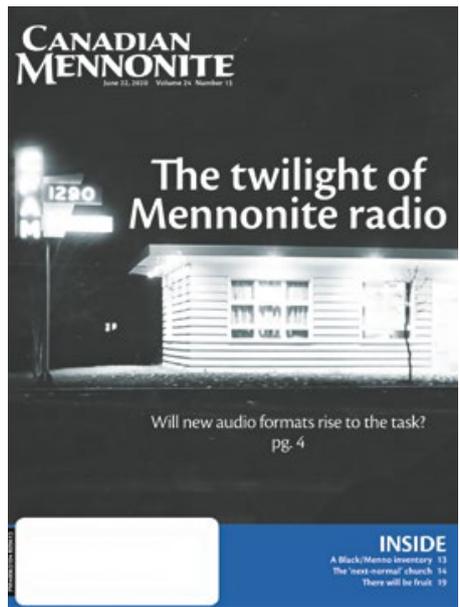
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**Third-place entry**

• **General Excellence in Print**, magazine. Tobi Thiessen, publisher; Virginia A. Hostetler, executive editor; Ross W. Muir, managing editor (Issues May 25—“Open to us a door”; June 22—“The twilight of Mennonite radio”; Sept. 28—“An eye for beauty.”)

Judge’s comment: “If you wanted a guide to ‘being the church’ in pandemic times, you could find it here. This magazine gamely puts forth a coherent and well-organized series of pieces on how congregations can comport themselves during this global horror. With thematic resonance it covers the practical realities of doing church business with well-crafted nuance to its denominational role. (In an earlier life I spent 10 years as a denominational editor. Of late, I have pondered how I would have handled the pandemic were my hand at the tiller. My conclusion: I wouldn’t have done this well. Take a bow.)



**News brief**

**Building community with pandemic creativity**



YOUTUBE SCREENSHOT  
**Matthew Bailey-Dick prepares to make beef borscht in an episode of The First Mennonite Church in Vineland’s online cooking show on YouTube.**

As the pandemic continues to keep the church doors closed for in-person services, the council of The First Mennonite Church in Vineland brainstormed ideas of how to build community during this time, and it came up with cooking classes. Four classes have been posted on YouTube, with more coming. The recipes have included *portzeljke* (New Year’s fritters or cookies), beef borscht, biscuits, crème caramel and cinnamon buns. Most cooks followed the recipes closely. Some added the history of the dish or talked about the tools used, while others had music in the background, and one offered a gluten free version. All added humour, style, flair and tips for a successful finished dish. Each show was self-produced, with some help from family members. The only directive given was to limit the show to 30 minutes, and to have fun. Nathan Scott did the final assembly of each show. The cooking show took off, with viewers enjoying the stories behind the scene, and a look into the lives of the cooks. For a first-hand look, visit [thefirstmennonitechurch.wordpress.com/](http://thefirstmennonitechurch.wordpress.com/).

—BY MARIA H. KLASSEN

# The church lives on in the people

*Hanley Mennonite closes after nearly 100 years*

By Donna Schulz

Saskatchewan Correspondent

HANLEY, SASK.

“Understand this as part of the life cycle of the church,” says Gary Peters. “We’ve been in the process of aging, now we’re in the process of dying.”

This may be a painful way to view what has happened to Hanley Mennonite Church, the congregation he has pastored for the past 32 years, but he says it’s preferable to thinking of the church simply as an organization. “Then you think of [closing] as a type of failure and you start blaming others,” he says. “But if you understand it as a life cycle in the personal sense, it allows you to think of other reasons why this is happening.”

Hanley Mennonite made the difficult decision to close in January and held its final service on Easter Sunday, April 4; 27 people attended, including non-resident members from Saskatoon.

For some years, attendance averaged 15 to 20 people, including children. The official membership is 75, but many no longer live in the community.

Joy Kroeger prepared a history of the congregation for the closing service. Much of what follows is gleaned from her writing.

In 1924, Mennonite immigrants from the Soviet Union (now Ukraine) settled on farms west of Hanley, just over 60 kilometres south of Saskatoon. By 1925, they were holding worship services in each other’s homes and machine sheds.

That year, these families joined other Mennonites to form the *Nordheimer Gemeinde*, a group of congregations that, at its peak, had 400 members in a broad area spanning much of southern Saskatchewan. But by the 1930s the *Gemeinde* had decreased to three congregations. Hanley, Dundurn and Pleasant Point Mennonite churches remained part of the *Gemeinde* until it dissolved in 1975.

The congregation built its first meeting-house in 1929, on 0.8 hectares of land purchased by the ladies aid group.

During a large celebration in the 1950s,

a beam in the building’s foundation broke, collapsing the floor. The church constructed a new building in 1956. At its dedication, Pastor Jacob Schellenberg preached on I Corinthians 3:11: “*For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*”

Also during the 1950s, the congregation ordained two women to serve as missionaries. Esther Patkau served in Japan for 30 years, and Mary Epp served in the Congo for 23 years.

Hanley Mennonite always called pastors from within the congregation. According to the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online website, Johann J. Klassen was the congregation’s founding minister.

The church called Gary and his wife, Margaret Ewen Peters, into ministry in 1989. As the congregation’s first salaried ministers, they served together until 2011, when Margaret resigned to serve the Fiske and Herschel Ebenfeld Mennonite congregations. Gary continued as Hanley Mennonite’s sole pastor on a half-time basis.

Kroeger writes that, when the church dwindled in numbers during the 1990s, the remaining congregants worked at being an intentionally intergenerational group. They also rewrote their constitution and adapted their church structure in response to this evolving reality. Eventually, congregational meetings and church council meetings were one and the same thing, as they became what Kroeger describes as a “committee of the whole.”

In early 2020, Gary told the congregation he wished to move toward retirement. He wanted to resign from his duties at Hanley Mennonite and partner with Margaret once again in serving the Fiske and Herschel congregations.

The Hanley congregation knew it



HANLEY MENNONITE CHURCH PHOTO

At a church picnic in 1987, Ron Froese, left, steadies the boat as Nancy Martens, Joanne Patkau, Heather Peters, Lisa Martens and Nathan Froese paddle.



HANLEY MENNONITE CHURCH PHOTO

**Henry Peters, left, Hanley Mennonite Church's pastor, stands with Margaret Ewen Peters and Gary Peters at their installation as lay ministers in 1989.**

needed to make a decision.

"We no longer had the numbers, the energy or the finances to continue as we had in the past," writes Kroeger. And so the church elected to close.

Decisions about what to do with the building, the land and the cemetery have yet to be made, and the future for members is also unknown.

"We're a very close group," Kroeger says. "Even though the church is closing, there is interest in continuing to get together for worship."

Gary has encouraged congregants to transfer membership to another church, ideally another Mennonite Church Saskatchewan congregation.

But Kroeger says this isn't so easily done during a pandemic. "With COVID, it's not an easy thing for us to move to another body right now," she says. "At this point, we can't learn to know another church enough to say that we want to transfer. I think that's why our group has expressed interest in continuing."

Gary says he isn't sure what the future will bring, but knows that, although the church building is closing, the church lives on in the people. "We are part of a larger and grander body," he says, "and we will be called to participate in ways we can't imagine yet." ❧

# Greetings and gifts on Good Friday

*Drive-through event introduces new pastor*

By Amy Rinner Waddell  
B.C. Correspondent

**M**embers of Chilliwack's Crossroads Community Church found a creative way on Easter weekend to both introduce its new pastor in person and to celebrate Easter with the community.

For two hours on Good Friday afternoon, April 2, the Crossroads community hosted an event in the parking lot at Cottonwood 4 Cinemas in Chilliwack, the last location the congregation used for in-person services. Unbeknownst to the congregation, the theatre had advertised the event on its website several weeks before, so people with no connection with Crossroads also came.

Participants could drive to four different locations in the parking lot:

- **In one** area, Pastor Gerry Binnema and wife Elaine greeted and chatted with people, meeting most for the first time.
- **In another**, free popcorn was provided by the theatre and distributed by Kyle Dyck, the church's youth pastor.
- **At the third**, a trailer was set up to receive donations for the local food bank.
- **At the final** station, volunteers gave goodie bags to participants, age-appropriately geared for preschoolers, children aged 5 to 9 and 10 to 12, teens and adults.

"We gave out the gift bags with the instruction to wait until Easter Sunday to open them, an effort to create the sense of waiting and anticipation appropriate for Good Friday," said Binnema.

A door prize was presented on

the church's website during the Easter morning online worship service.

"It was good fun, and we had a good turnout," says Binnema. ❧



PHOTOS BY CORY BUETTNER

**Byron Wiebe welcomes people to the Crossroads Community Church drive-through event on Easter weekend.**



**Daniel Visser, a member of Crossroads Community Church, accepts donations to the food bank as part of the congregation's Easter weekend drive-through.**

# Palestine-Israel Network shares *Undercurrents* podcast

*Stories of 'co-resistance' spark conversations at online event*

By Janet Bauman

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
KITCHENER, ONT.

At its 2016 assembly, Mennonite Church Canada passed a resolution affirming nonviolent efforts of Palestinians and Israelis to overcome injustice in their region, and committing Canadian Mennonites to “deepen their understanding of Palestine-Israel relationships.”

In response to that resolution, the MC Eastern Canada Palestine-Israel Network (PIN) was formed to educate, build relationships and advocate for peace and justice. Similar groups across Canada connect to each other through the MC Canada PIN.

On April 8, the MC Eastern Canada PIN hosted an online event to discuss “David and Goliath,” an episode from *Undercurrents*, a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario podcast. More than 50 people joined.

Ken Ogasawara, MCC Ontario’s communications content specialist, produces *Undercurrents*. He is also a member of MC Eastern Canada’s PIN. In this episode he explores the history and current situation in Palestine and Israel.

He begins with a “thought experiment,” inviting listeners to imagine their reactions if Manitobans invaded and occupied Saskatchewan. He says that what would seem ridiculous here in Canada is reality for Palestinians today living under Israeli occupation.

Ogasawara describes how the State of Israel was created, displacing 750,000 Palestinians. He also explains how a 1948 United Nations resolution giving Palestinians the right to live in peace and return to their homes was never honoured. Israel also remains “in blatant violation” of the Geneva Conventions which set humanitarian standards during conflicts, he says.

Ogasawara cites Christian Zionism as the reason why the State of Israel has not

been held accountable for these violations. Zionism is a movement to establish and protect a Jewish homeland. For Christian evangelicals, supporting Zionism “serves as a form of repentance” for western Christianity’s anti-Judaism over the centuries, and is seen as “an essential step on the way to Jesus’ second coming” by dispensationalists, according to Ogasawara. Their fervour doesn’t leave room for considering the consequences for Palestinians.

The United States has vetoed 44 UN motions critical of the State of Israel, making Israel one of the “most well armed nations on earth,” Ogasawara said.

In the podcast, David Chow, a pastor and member of MCC Canada board of directors, describes how he was raised to

support Zionism, but he says that, after a learning trip to the region, where he was hosted by a Palestinian family, it was like “scales falling off my eyes.” His stereotypes about Palestinians were challenged, he says, and he found himself repenting and praying for forgiveness. He says he began to see how unconditional support for Israel contributes to the suffering of Palestinians.

Ogasawara sees value in amplifying voices of those who are oppressed, and telling stories of peacemaking that are rarely heard. MCC works in partnership with peace groups on both sides.

He says he made the podcast after meeting “an unlikely pair” of peace activists from different sides of the divide. In 2018, MCC invited two of its peace partners in the region to share in a cross-country speaking tour. Sahar Vardi, a Jewish



FILE PHOTO BY BYRON REMPEL-BURKHOLDER

*Peace activists, Sahar Vardi, right, a Jewish Israeli, and Tarek Al-Zoughbi, a Christian Palestinian, are pictured during their cross-Canada speaking tour in 2018 sponsored by MCC. They are also featured in ‘David and Goliath,’ an episode in MCC Ontario’s podcast, Undercurrents, which explores the history and current situation in Palestine and Israel.*

Israeli from Jerusalem, actively protests her country's occupation of Palestinian territories and was imprisoned for refusing mandatory military duty. Tarek Al-Zoughbi, a Christian Palestinian who works with Wi'am, a Palestinian Conflict Transformation Center in Bethlehem, trains youth in peace and reconciliation.

Vardi describes how quickly the "normalization of violence" happens for Israelis who are taught to believe that everyone is trying to kill them, and that the only solution is a strong military.

Al-Zoughbi explains some of the impact on families and communities when Palestinian children are rounded up and imprisoned by Israeli Defence Forces. The State of Israel prosecutes 500 to 700 children each year in military courts, where there is a 99 percent conviction rate, he says.

These activists say, "The enemy is not the individual on the other side of the wall; it is the systematic implementation of a policy of fear that makes peaceful coexistence impossible."

Ogasawara asks, "What if David and Goliath 'chose to be neighbours,' sharing the land and water?" It is the wish of many today who are weary of the fear and the violence, he says.

Vardi adds, "We don't want coexistence, we want co-resistance," to build something new together.

Amy Zavitz, facilitator and PIN member, encouraged participants to "sit in the tension" between living under the legacy of colonialism in Canada while opposing Israeli occupation of Palestine.

Several participants noted that Mennonites also need to come to terms with their own anti-Semitism.

Some next steps included more education and book studies, partnerships with other peace groups in Canada; and encouraging the Canadian government to help get COVID-19 vaccines to Palestine, to take independent stands on Israel at the UN, and support the movement to boycott, divest and sanction Israel economically. ❧

To listen to *Undercurrents*, which is supported by a charitable fund from Kindred Credit Union, visit [bit.ly/3gnQfKI](http://bit.ly/3gnQfKI).



# The Gourmet Girls

*Five women share a weekly meal during COVID-19*

By Joanne De Jong  
Alberta Correspondent

Imagine if you could eat at a five-star restaurant every Saturday night, even during COVID-19. That's what has been happening in one neighborhood in Calgary since May 2020.

A recent menu included flavourful prosciutto-wrapped asparagus sprinkled with fresh parmesan and lemon by Charlene Delcourt; juicy garlic-rosemary turkey glazed with Dijon and honey mustards and accompanied by stewed

celebrate Delcourt's birthday on May 9. She told everyone to bring their own buns while she served up the burgers. Everyone was socially distanced. That is when the women started to discuss how they could continue to connect during the pandemic.

The women are all close friends and live in the same area of the city. In fact, everyone but Hovey has lived with Rachert at one point in their lives. Rachert jokingly calls her house a "home for wayward girls."



PHOTO BY JEANETTE THIESSEN

**Some of 'The Gourmet Girls' meet in the Jeanette Thiessen's backyard to celebrate Daunine Rachert's birthday on Oct. 10, 2020. Pictured from left to right: guest Marjorie Kornelsen, Charlene Delcourt, Elaine Hovey and Daunine Rachert.**

cranberries, prepared by Marlene Nelson; crispy and caramelized brussels sprouts drizzled with balsamic vinegar and honey, made by Jeanette Thiessen; and zesty honey sweet potatoes mashed and peppered with roasted pumpkin seeds, by Daunine Rachert. And no five-star meal would be complete without a mouth-watering dessert—a pear Tarte Tatin baked upside-down covered in phyllo pastry and glazed with caramel sauce and brandy—delivered by Elaine Hovey.

According to Jeanette Thiessen of Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary, the idea began when Rachert invited the women to her backyard for a barbecue to

At first, each woman committed to making the entire meal—an appetizer, a main, two veggies, and a dessert—on a rotating schedule. This could mean up to 20 plastic containers of food. Everyone would meet outside the home of whoever was responsible for the meal, chat and then take their containers home to eat while the whole group visited on Zoom. After seven months, they decided to shift to a potluck style.

That is when Hovey was finally convinced to join the group, saying, "I told them they were crazy!" Having each group member make one part of the meal seemed more manageable to her. Now one person

chooses and cooks the main dish and everyone else makes something complementary. They eat the appetizer on Zoom and the rest when it suits.

As five single friends needing human connection during COVID-19, they discovered that the idea to commit to sharing a meal every week has not been as difficult as some might think.

Nelson has only missed one week. “This is a huge highlight of my week,” she says. “I love every part, from looking through recipe books, shopping on Saturday, and spending time with friends. . . . It’s also a distraction.”

Rachert says it is important to connect, and the meals give them a purpose and something to look forward to, “like prom,” during this difficult time. She adds that one of the best things is that “we have developed a stronger and stronger bond as friends.”

Delcourt says everyone in the group puts a lot of effort into the meal, making each person feel special. She says the amount of food prepared feeds each person for more than one night, and the leftovers are delicious. “I savoured Marlene’s scalloped potatoes for three nights!” she says.

Whether socially distanced in a backyard, or together on Zoom, sharing their lives in this way has been a true blessing, says Delcourt, adding that even as women who don’t always agree, especially around politics, there is fun in arguing and interrupting each other. They love each other unconditionally as they laugh, share stories, information, book and movie suggestions, and, of course, recipes.

After meeting for almost a year, they decided to name themselves “The Gourmet Girls”—a modern take on *The Golden Girls* TV show. Plans are in the works to create swag with their group name and photos, starting with distribution bags. Creating a cookbook with their favourite recipes has also been discussed.

Although the women say the weekly get-together has been a beautiful thing, they all lament being unable to hug. They have all had their first vaccination and are looking forward to finally receiving the second shot so they can once again share meals in person, especially the ham with pineapple salsa. Everyone agrees that it is unbelievably delicious. ❧

## Women’s group revitalizing its place in community

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe  
Manitoba Correspondent

“**W**oven: Mennonite Women Together” is the new name of the formerly titled Mennonite Women Manitoba Working Group. The group shed its long moniker as part of its rebranding this year, which also included a new logo and vision, in an effort to revitalize its presence within the regional church.

The name “Woven” recognizes the rich history of Mennonite sewing circles and “the women who got us where we are now,” says Bethany Bunko, a Woven member who did the rebranding design. “There’s a lot of this textile imagery used in lots of theological conversation,” she adds, like the idea that God’s people are woven together like a quilt.

Woven strives to bring together women from many different backgrounds and ages.

“We want it to really feel like we are one. Even though there’s a lot of things in this world that divide us, we all can be woven into one thing,” she says.

Woven also became an official related organization of Mennonite Church Manitoba in December 2019, which merged the group’s financial operations and ensured more stability for its members. This enabled it to inherit \$24,000 from the dissolved Mennonite Women Canada (MWC) organization.

With these funds, a scholarship was established for female international graduate students at Canadian Mennonite University, women who come from Mennonite or Anabaptist congregations and hope to return to serve in their communities.

Elsie Rempel, chair of Woven, says the

scholarship aims to “empower women in our Mennonite churches internationally” and “build stronger connections with sisters in the Global South,” who face many more barriers to working in leadership than women in the Mennonite church in Canada.

But Woven also plays an important role close to home. It is an opportunity for women in Manitoba to build intergenerational relationships and network between congregations, something that was happening at weekend retreats before the pandemic and is currently happening in Woven’s online book club, led by Bunko.

From March to May, 17 participants have been gathering weekly to read and discuss Rachel Held Evans’ book *Inspired*. In this environment, women can ask questions, express doubts and study Scripture in a way that honours their stories, something that some still can’t do in their own contexts.

“To have a group of women who are active and working toward the increased freedom and recognition of women to share their gifts freely within the church and society, I think remains good even in our pretty liberated world,” says Rempel.

The six-member Woven committee is planning a series of conversations on theology and lived experience to follow the book club, and is working at having more diverse representation on the committee. The committee is looking forward to hosting a retreat on mental health when COVID-19 restrictions allow. ❧

To learn more, visit [facebook.com/woven.mcm](https://facebook.com/woven.mcm).



**Woven**  
Mennonite Women Together

# Learning to communicate

*Saskatchewan youth develop skills during online retreat*

By Donna Schulz  
Saskatchewan Correspondent

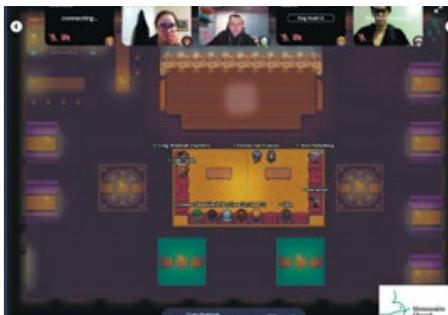
**S**askatchewan Mennonite Youth Organization normally holds an annual retreat at Shekinah Retreat Centre. This year, because of COVID-19 restrictions, youth and sponsors met online on March 27 using a platform called Gather.

Kirsten Hamm-Epp, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's regional church minister, said the platform allowed planners to create a virtual Shekinah, complete with timber lodge.

Guest speaker Tracey Mitchell presented two 45-minute sessions helping youth explore the theme, "Who's right/wrong: Fact, friction and friendship in an era of information overload." The first session focused on supporting youth to build their confidence around what they believe, said Mitchell. The second session offered youth the skills to be able to respond in a respectful way when someone disagrees with them.

Cara Harms, a youth participant, said the retreat "was more fun than I expected," and that she "appreciated being able to be together" with friends.

Another participant, Tyreese Hildebrandt,



**Using avatars chosen when logging in, participants moved through the retreat space and engaged in worship, games and a virtual coffee house, along with Tracey Mitchell's presentations.**

said Mitchell's lessons would mean he would "not get into as many arguments with my brothers," and they would cause him to think about how much he cares about a person before arguing with them.

Harms said she had always thought about the things Mitchell taught them, but that she would likely be more conscious of her interactions with others in the future. ❧



SCREENSHOTS BY CRAIG FRIESEN

**Using a platform called Gather, planners created a virtual Shekinah Retreat Centre as the venue for the Saskatchewan Mennonite Youth Organization's online retreat.**

## News brief

### CMU launches new Centre for Career and Vocation



**Christine Kampen Robinson**

WINNIPEG—Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) celebrated the launch of its newest initiative, the Centre for Career and Vocation on March 1. The centre's mission is "to equip members of the CMU community to purposefully connect calling, courses and career through curriculum-integrated academic and vocational advising, experiential and work-integrated learning, and encouraging interdisciplinary exploration and creativity." It is funded by the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE), a North American network of colleges and universities that offers grant funding, resources and support to enrich the intellectual and theological exploration of vocation among undergraduate students. CMU is the first Canadian post-secondary institution to become a member of NetVUE. The centre brings together three areas: career development and vocational discernment; practicum/work-integrated learning; and vocation-centred advising and curriculum. It will provide students with career advising and resources through individual appointments, workshops and peer coaching, as well as offer for-credit courses in career development. At the helm of the operation is Christine Kampen Robinson, who comes to the project with extensive experience working in career advising and transition programming for students at other universities, as well as teaching and helping to coordinate practica at CMU over the last couple years. To learn more, visit [cmu.ca/ccv](http://cmu.ca/ccv).

—CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY

# Making a difference

*Webinar explains how Grow Hope Niagara project helps around the world*

Maria H. Klassen  
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

**F**orty-one acres in Campden, Ont., are being cultivated, planted and harvested for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, with sponsorships of \$400 an acre helping to plant a crop for the Grow Hope Niagara project. When the harvest is sold, farmers will donate the money to the Foodgrains Bank through Mennonite Central Committee. MCC uses this money for various projects in different countries, to alleviate poverty around the world. The Canadian government, working through Global Affairs Canada, matches the final tally up to 4:1.



PHOTO BY RILEY KOOP

*Sponsors visit the Grow Hope Niagara project in 2020.*

The idea to set up a grain banking system to use in the time of need started in 1974, when Canada had a bumper crop and the people in Bangladesh were facing famine. To date, 15 denominational partners, MCC being one of the largest among them, are working together in development projects around the globe. There are currently 39 growing projects in Canada, located from Alberta to New Brunswick. One of them is Grow Hope Niagara.

In 1989, Tom Neufeld, the MCC Ontario contact for the Foodgrains Bank, asked the members of The First Mennonite Church in Vineland, Ont., to help start a growing project. He went to Ethiopia in 2020, just before travelling stopped due to the pandemic. He shared some of his experiences on a webinar called “The Human Face of Climate Change” on March 31.

The 15-member group toured several projects that were changing the face of agricultural methods in Ethiopia, helping to increase productivity and to combat destruction from climate change. One change is to the earlier method of subsistence farming, which included plowing

with oxen and planting by hand. This frequent tilling left the soil vulnerable to nutrient loss and soil erosion, Neufeld said. MCC, with its partners, is promoting conservation-agriculture training, including strip tillage, reduced or no tillage, multi-crop systems, planting high-residue crops, crop rotation and planting trees. These new adaptations have increased productivity between 30 percent and 90 percent.

Water-table retention and water quality were problems, he said. Now check dams are being built, which help restore natural vegetation and increase valuable agricultural production. The installation of community pumps have increased the water supply and improved water quality.

Gender equality and sensitivity training are strengthening the role of women as farmers and partners, according to Neufeld. They now have a say as to what crops are planted, stored and sold. Increasingly, more farms are headed by women.

Clarke and Heather Fretz were service workers in Croatia with MCC from 2005 to 2008. Clarke, who was MCC’s capacity builder overseas, said it was important to

work with local partners, who had ideas of what was needed.

He said relief kits were made available for the people of Sarajevo, who were recovering from a civil war of the 1990s. Christmas shoe boxes, filled in England with items for children, were given to those who had fled from Bosnia to Croatia.

One partner bought a chicken farm where refugees could be trained with new job skills, such as building and raising poultry. MCC started a fundraiser so people could pay for chickens to be given to villagers living on war-torn farms. This was done

with the help of the local church. In the same way, sheep could be donated to farms to re-establish flocks.

Larry and Margaret Dyck are farmers in Campden. Dyck is the field manager of Grow Hope Niagara, and he explained on the webinar how Grow Hope Niagara works. At first, corporate sponsors funded the acres. In 2016, the model changed to individual sponsorships.

The Dycks visited Rwanda in 2017. Larry explained how farming is so different between Canada and Rwanda, with large machinery and thousands of acres compared to one or two acres cultivated by manual labour. Canadians can’t go to another country thinking they have all the answers, he said, noting that he learned about conservation agriculture, working together in partnerships and the value of community support while he was there.

Neufeld talked about the loss of rural livelihoods, from changing weather patterns and the growing number of refugees, adding that the pandemic has made everyone aware that they are all in it together. ☺

# Deborah Tewelde sets her faith in action

*A response to racial discrimination*

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada

**D**eborah Tewelde, a member of Meheret Evangelical Church in Kitchener, Ont., a Mennonite Church Eastern Canada congregation, received the 2019 Lincoln M. Alexander award given by the Province of Ontario to youth who have shown strong leadership in eliminating racial discrimination.

“Cameron Heights Collegiate Institute [in Kitchener] is one of the most diverse schools in the district but was not really equipped to deal with and celebrate that diversity,” Tewelde says of her time at Cameron Heights.

Disturbed by the racism she and her peers were seeing and experiencing, they began to plan a student assembly to be held during Black History Month to learn about, share and celebrate Black culture and history. Because the assembly was optional, teachers had to choose whether to register their classes to attend or to maintain their classes as scheduled.

“Some teachers were not sure why it was necessary to interrupt their class schedules,” Tewelde says.

But the turnout to that first assembly was good and the organizers were able to request it be a mandatory assembly the following year, which was granted.

“After the assembly, we began to hear more stories from Black students,” she says. “We realized that we needed to create a safe space for them to share their stories, have access to information, and provide a place to report their concerns. We also wanted to provide a space for students and staff who were not Black to come and learn about Black culture and heritage.”

Tewelde co-founded the Black Student Union at Cameron Heights, and they began to organize student meetings and community interactions on inclusion and equality.

“I don’t know if I would feel as strongly



Deborah Tewelde

as I did if I didn’t have faith,” she reflects. “God is a God of justice. The Bible speaks about crying out for those who can’t. I definitely felt led by God to do the work that I did. I was in a place where I was able to speak up for people who weren’t able.”

She was surprised to have received a phone call this past December advising her that she had won the 2019 Lincoln M. Alexander Award, in part because a year had already lapsed. “I just assumed someone else got it,” she laughs. The

Ontario government announced the 2019 and 2020 awards at the same time.

Lincoln M. Alexander was the first Black person elected to the House of Commons, the first Black cabinet minister and Ontario’s first Black lieutenant-governor. Tewelde is one of only 70 people who have received the award since it was established in 1993.

The Black Student Union continues at Cameron Heights. “They are still doing well and that’s really good to hear,” she says, after being updated by a teacher. “It does feel good to be recognized for the work we did, but I think that the long-term impact is more important than what happened in the two years that I was there.”

Tewelde is currently in Antigonish, N.S., on a four-month work term as a community assistant at L’Arche, which provides a place where people with and without intellectual disabilities share life together. She also remotely oversees the junior-youth program of Meheret Evangelical Church. At the end of her term with L’Arche, she will return to Ontario and resume her studies at the University of Waterloo. ❧

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## News brief

### Rebecca Stoltzfus appointed to second term as Goshen College president

GOSHEN, IND.—**Rebecca Stoltzfus** was unanimously reappointed to a second five-year term as president of Goshen College beginning July 1, after receiving strong affirmation for her relational gifts, strategic thinking, community-mindedness and communication skills. Stoltzfus, who began her first term as the college's 18th president in November 2017, was lauded for her many accomplishments during her first term:



- Successfully fundraised for and renovated the Center for Communication Studies in 2020, as well as the Juanita Lark Welcome Center, the Hunsberger Commons and the Leaf Raker Cafe in the Union Building in 2019.
- Had a record fundraising year during the college's 125th anniversary year, with US\$2.3 million raised for the unrestricted Goshen College Fund.
- Added new undergraduate academic programs of study, including a public health major and a criminal justice & restorative justice major.
- Started a presidential blog where she writes regular reflections and has gained thousands of readers.

A 1983 Goshen College graduate, Stoltzfus received master's and doctoral degrees in human nutrition from Cornell University (Ithaca, N.Y.). She taught human nutrition at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (Baltimore, Md.) and then joined the Cornell faculty in 2002 as professor of human nutrition and then vice-provost for undergraduate education, before returning to lead her alma mater.

—GOSHEN COLLEGE

### CMU alumna wins international writing competition

With only 24 hours to write a short story from concept to completion, some writers might buckle under the pressure. But not **Katie Doke Sawatzky**. She won NYC Midnight's second annual 250-word Microfiction Challenge, placing first out of more than 5,400 other contestants from around the world. Doke Sawatzky, who completed an English degree at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, now lives in Regina with her partner and their two children. She works as a freelance journalist and communications coordinator for Mennonite Church Canada. This wasn't her first time entering one of NYC Midnight's competitions; she has participated in the 100-word and 1,000-word fiction challenges, but she had never proceeded past the second round. But this year was a different story. She made it through all three rounds of the competition, winning with her final story, "The bundle." Each round, contestants had to write a different 250-word story in just 24 hours, based on a specific genre, word and action. "The bundle" is a tragic tale that begins with a midwife taking a baby who has died right after being born. Doke Sawatzky has been writing nonfiction for much longer than fiction. She got into journalism by writing and editing for *Geez*, *Canadian Mennonite* and *Rhubarb*. She honed these skills through a master of journalism degree from the University of Regina. Find more of Katie Doke Sawatzky's work online at [katedokesawatzky.com](http://katedokesawatzky.com).



—CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY

## Calendar

### Nationwide

**May 18:** The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (of which MC Canada is a member) and Youth Worker Community are co-hosting an online book discussion, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. EDT. Beth Severson, author of "Not Done Yet: Reaching and Keeping Emerging Adults," will take part in a panel discussion. Participants will discuss the book in small groups, then engage in a live Q&A with the author. To register, visit [bit.ly/3uMNsib](http://bit.ly/3uMNsib).

**June 3-5:** MC Canada is offering to sponsor 20 people from across the nationwide church community to attend this year's virtual NAIITS symposium, whose theme is "Treaty and covenant: Creating space for hope." For more information, or to register, visit: [bit.ly/39WyeiC](http://bit.ly/39WyeiC).

### Ontario

**May 1:** The public is invited to Conscience Canada's annual general meeting, which will be held virtually on Zoom at 3:30 p.m. EDT. Critical action regarding the future of the organization will be taken at this meeting. Email [info@consciencecanada.ca](mailto:info@consciencecanada.ca) to get the Zoom link.

**June 8-22:** Ninth International Conference on Aging and Spirituality, a virtual conference hosted by Conrad Grebel University College. Theme: "Vital connections: Claiming voice and learning to listen." Seven 90-minute conference sessions will take place between June 8 and 22. To learn more or to register, visit [uwaterloo.ca/aging-spirituality](http://uwaterloo.ca/aging-spirituality).

### International

**July 1-4, 2022:** Mennonite World Conference's Global Youth Summit, in Salatiga, Indonesia. Theme: "Life in the Spirit: Learn. Serve. Worship." To learn more, visit [mwc-cmm.org/gys](http://mwc-cmm.org/gys).

**July 5-10, 2022:** Mennonite World Conference's global assembly, in Semarang, Indonesia. Theme: "Following Jesus together across barriers." For more information, visit [mwc-cmm.org/assembly/indonesia-2022](http://mwc-cmm.org/assembly/indonesia-2022).

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





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Employment opportunity  
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Wellesley Mennonite Church is a progressive and community-oriented congregation. We are seeking a person to fill a 0.5 FTE position to minister alongside our lead pastor.

The successful candidate will work to inspire and articulate the congregation's vision, goals, and mission. This individual will be enthusiastic, sensitive, a caring and confident leader who will inspire the congregation to expand and develop their gifts. The candidate will be flexible, creative, demonstrate strong organizational and communication skills, and possess musical skills. The candidate will have a Christian understanding of our Anabaptist Mennonite faith and core values. The successful candidate enjoys working with people of all ages and will be involved with music, Children and Youth Ministry and Christian Formation.

For more information please go to the Mennonite Church Eastern Canada website: [www.mcec.ca/ministry-opportunities](http://www.mcec.ca/ministry-opportunities) or contact [pastoraltransitions@mcec.ca](mailto:pastoraltransitions@mcec.ca).

[www.wellesleymennonite.ca](http://www.wellesleymennonite.ca)

## Classifieds

### Employment Opportunities

**Illustrator wanted for**  
10 drawings of a person with Down Syndrome for book to be published. Compensation given. Contact Melody at [write.on.begins@gmail.com](mailto:write.on.begins@gmail.com).



Employment opportunity  
**Lead Pastor**  
Calgary, Alberta

Foothills MC is a multi-generational urban church of 169 members. The fellowship was established in 1956 and is a member of Mennonite Church Alberta and MCCCanada.

A Lead Pastor is sought to guide the congregation after an 18-month interim ministry following our Lead Pastor's 20-year pastorate. Meet us by going to [www.foothillsmennonite.ca](http://www.foothillsmennonite.ca). Foothills MC is an Anabaptist faith community that desires to embody, share and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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](mailto:office@foothillsmennonite.ca), Attention of the Chair, Search Committee.



Employment opportunity  
**Youth Pastor**

North Leamington Mennonite Church (NLUMC) seeks an enthusiastic and

passionate disciple of Christ to join our three-member pastoral team as a half-time Youth Pastor.

NLUMC is a multigenerational congregation of approximately 270 active members. Located near Point Pelee National Park and the shores of Lake Erie in southwestern Ontario, the town of Leamington is a rich multicultural community of 30,000 people, with a local economy including agriculture, food processing, manufacturing, and a rapidly growing greenhouse industry.

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- Committed to Anabaptist theology and practices, with post-secondary training from an Anabaptist seminary or university, or pastoral experience in an Anabaptist congregation.
- Training and/or pastoral experience in other theological backgrounds will be considered.
- Recent graduates are welcome to apply for this opportunity to learn and grow within a supportive team.

Submit application to: [pastoraltransitions@mcec.ca](mailto:pastoraltransitions@mcec.ca) by May 14, 2021. For more information, contact the Search Committee at: [office@NLUMC.com](mailto:office@NLUMC.com) or call (519) 817-5929.

[northleamington.com](http://northleamington.com)



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### The good news of 'holy terror'

The Gospel of Mark gives us a different take on Jesus' resurrection than we typically think of, and it's a take worth reflecting on this Easter season.

[canadianmennonite.org/blog/holyterror](http://canadianmennonite.org/blog/holyterror)



### Looking for applicants . . . and donors

Mennonite Church Canada is renewing its call for applicants to the Company of 1000 Study Reserve Fund, which equips pastors through forgivable loans and tuition grants.

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



### A Q&A with Elaine Enns and Ched Myers

Authors Elaine Enns and Ched Myers talk about their new book, *Healing Haunted Histories: A Settler Discipleship of Decolonization*.

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



### Camp Valaqua, then and now

Finding some 60-year-old letters caused Canadian Mennonite University student Levi Klassen to reflect on exceptionalism and progress.

[canadianmennonite.org/blog/valaqua](http://canadianmennonite.org/blog/valaqua)

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Please send expressions of interest to Tobi Thiessen at [publisher@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:publisher@canadianmennonite.org). Go to [www.canadianmennonite.org/employment](http://www.canadianmennonite.org/employment) for more details.

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

# Learning to accept help

By Judson Rempel  
Winnipeg Mennonite Elementary & Middle Schools

In just two weeks, Lawrence Hamm went from running a school to being told he had terminal brain cancer. But if you met him today, you wouldn't know that.

"People keep asking me, 'Lawrence, you seem so calm and at peace,'" Hamm says over a video message from his home. "I liken that to my deep faith and the people that are praying for me."

In February, doctors told Hamm, the superintendent/chief executive officer of Winnipeg Mennonite Elementary & Middle Schools (WMEMS), that he had terminal brain cancer and put him on an aggressive treatment plan.

The WMEMS community stepped up, with prayers and messages of encouragement for Hamm and his family.

"This has been a very humbling experience for me. I've had to learn how to accept help from others," he says.

There are other, more surprising, ways, that the WMEMS community showed up. The first time Hamm walked into the Health Sciences Centre, he ran into a former WMEMS parent. He was the emergency room attending physician. "We got this, we got your back," Hamm says the doctor told him.



*Lawrence Hamm connects with his WMEMS staff from home.*

As Hamm went into his operation, he spotted the anesthesiologist, another school parent. In the neuro ward, a research doctor and a WMEMS parent went out of his way to help put Hamm at ease.

"I know these are all God moments," Hamm says. "It couldn't have been anything else other than God. It put me at such a place of peace and ease."

WMEMS prides itself on having a "vibrant school community."

For Hamm, he has experienced it firsthand, from the best moments to the hardest.

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PHOTO BY RYAN DUECK / TEXT BY JOANNE DE JONG

*Every Maundy Thursday, Lethbridge Mennonite Church shares a simple soup supper together before entering into a communion service. In this second year without gathering due to COVID-19, the church decided to make soup kits for all the members to take home, prepare and eat before meeting together for communion on Zoom. Each congregant received a soup mix, stock, buns and cheese, a bag of strawberries and grapes, an apple and an orange, as well as grape juice and a cup for communion. A pot of tulips was also included. Kits were prepared by Linda Peters and Elaine Klassen. Beth Moyer made the grape juice.*

# Photo finish



PHOTOS BY KYLE PENNER / TEXT BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

*The youth of Grace Mennonite Church in Steinbach, Man., collected 2,123 rolls of toilet paper to donate to Steinbach Community Outreach, an organization serving people struggling to meet their essential needs, especially those experiencing poverty or homelessness. After talking about the Bible story of the Good Samaritan, the youth wanted to help people in their community with less access to resources. Toilet paper, a symbol of the pandemic's frenzied beginnings a year ago, seemed like the perfect fit. They ran the fundraiser during the month leading up to Easter and exceeded their goal of 2021 rolls.*

