

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

January 10, 2022 Volume 26 Number 1



## 'A glimmer of hope in their eyes'

MDS responds to flooding in Princeton, B.C.

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## EDITORIAL

# Telling your stories

BY VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER  
Executive Editor



As we launch into 2022, it's helpful to reflect on the year that has passed. It's also a time to consider what's ahead.

With a presence both in print and online, *Canadian Mennonite* reaches readers within the Mennonite Church Canada family and readers who observe us from outside. I spent time looking at the 2021 content that resonated for both sets of readers.

One widely read section is Readers Write. Last year 118 items appeared there, written by a total of 100 individuals. Predictably, the most commented topic had to do with health—COVID-19 and vaccines—but letters also dealt with questions around more general health care and medical assistance in dying. Writers were interested in theological subjects such as Jesus, evangelism, freedom and forgiveness. Social justice was a popular topic, with letters about indigenous rights, victims' right and policing. Some letter writers addressed matters concerning the abuse of power: sexual abuse and the survivors of abuse. A portion of letters were about the care of the environment and the climate crisis.

Online readers continue to be interested in Mennonites and their more traditional Anabaptist cousins. "Do Mennonites believe in vaccines?" was a popular question readers searched for. The most-read 2021 articles had to do with Mennonite attitudes toward the coronavirus vaccination. Like the contributors to Readers Write, online readers were attracted to articles about

sexual misconduct and social justice. An article about defunding the police got many views as did one on the historical connections between Mennonite Central Committee and national socialism.

These were some things that concerned many of us in 2021 and will likely continue in 2022. What will the world look like as it emerges, God willing, from the weight of COVID-19 in the coming year?

Congregations will undoubtedly be evaluating their life together and asking questions about identity and future activities. There will be some grieving, both corporate and individual. Some relationships might need mending and forgiveness. We might let go of some old practices, but we might also find that habits acquired in pandemic times have value for the "next normal." All these will be potential stories *CM* can tell.

The magazine will continue reporting on the activities of the global, nationwide and regional churches, including their major gatherings in 2022. At the beginning of July, Mennonite World Conference will hold the Global Youth Summit and the 17th Assembly. At the end of that month and into August, MC Canada adults and youth will take part in Gathering 2022 and the youth gathering Amplify!

The *CM* staff consider it a privilege to help tell these stories of our faith family and to be a venue in which its varied voices are heard. Thank you for trusting us to tell and share your stories with all the readers. Thank you also for sharing

your opinions—the challenges, the concerns and the affirmations.

This is also a time for expressing gratitude to the correspondents and writers, as well as the columnists, who help fill *CM's* pages with meaningful content. They are watching, learning, reporting and reflecting on what is happening in your community and throughout the country. Their regular contributions have been—and will continue to be vital for this publication.

In this issue, you will read the last of the articles submitted by Janet Bauman. For the past three years, she served as *CM's* main correspondent for Eastern Canada. With roots in the Kitchener-Waterloo area, Janet brought her curiosity, teaching experience and theological training to her reporting. She writes, "In this role, I have been privileged to experience many stimulating events and meet so many inspiring people. Thank you for that opportunity." And we thank her in return, for helping in the storytelling.

The search continues for an Alberta correspondent, to help tell the stories of Mennonites in Alberta. The ideal person for both this role and the now-vacant role of Eastern Canada correspondent has writing experience, an interest in the church and a willingness to learn more. In these two part-time positions, correspondents gather news about the people, churches, and organizations in their respective areas, as well as illustrating the news photographically. If you are interested, or know of someone who might be, please let us know.

In the year ahead, we envision you as part of this storytelling effort. Consider this your invitation to suggest ideas for future content. Feel free to contact the regional correspondent in your area, or me at [editor@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:editor@canadianmennonite.org). ✎



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PHOTO BY JOHN LONGHURST / MENNONITE DISASTER SERVICE

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# CANADIAN MENNONITE

490 Dutton Drive, Unit C5,  
Waterloo, ON, N2L 6H7

Phone: 519-884-3810 Toll-free: 1-800-378-2524 Fax: 519-884-3331

Website: canadianmennonite.org

Facebook.com/CanadianMennonite @CanMenno @canadianmennonite

### Please send all material to be considered for publication to

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Board Chair, Henry Krause, hakrause@telus.net, 604-888-3192

### Canadian Mennonite Staff

**Publisher,** Tobi Thiessen, publisher@canadianmennonite.org

**Executive Editor,** Virginia A. Hostetler, editor@canadianmennonite.org

**Managing Editor,** Ross W. Muir, managinged@canadianmennonite.org

**Online Media Manager,** Aaron Epp, onlinemgr@canadianmennonite.org

**Editorial Assistant,** Barb Draper, edassist@canadianmennonite.org

**Graphic Designer,** Betty Avery, designer@canadianmennonite.org

**Circulation/Finance,** Graham Aberdein, office@canadianmennonite.org

**Advertising,** advert@canadianmennonite.org

**Senior Writer,** Will Braun, seniorwriter@canadianmennonite.org

**B.C. Correspondent,** Amy Rinner Waddell, bc@canadianmennonite.org

**Alberta Correspondent,** ab@canadianmennonite.org

**Saskatchewan Correspondent,** Emily Summach, sk@canadianmennonite.org

**Manitoba Correspondent,** Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe, mb@canadianmennonite.org

**Eastern Canada Correspondent,** Janet Bauman, ec@canadianmennonite.org

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(e-mail) office@canadianmennonite.org

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## FEATURE

# Let's talk about power

What peacemakers need to understand about power

By Kimberly Penner

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*



ISTOCK.COM PHOTO BY GUTZEMBERG

**D**id you know, there are over 650 occurrences of the word “power” in the Bible? *Dunamis*, a Greek word for power, occurs 120 times in the New Testament and means “strength” or “ability.” It is used to describe, for example, the power of God (Matthew 22:29), the power of Elijah (Luke 1:17), and the power of evil spirits (I Corinthians 15:24). In the plural, it is translated as “miraculous powers.” Miracles are, in effect, mighty works or works of power!

Power, or the ability to effect change, is present in every relationship and context we find ourselves in. Are you aware of when you have more power than others? I

think first of my role as a parent of two young children (ages 5 and 2). While at times it feels like my kids are the ones controlling me, I can effect more change in our relationship than they can. As a pastor, I also have a significant amount of role-based power. I have the privilege and the responsibility of ministering to people in their times of vulnerability.

In each of these roles, as parent and pastor, it is important that I use my power appropriately to support and empower other people rather than to control, manipulate or abuse them. These are examples of formal power—power that is role- or position-based. Other examples of formal power in the church include the roles

of church council chair, board chair and chair of the pastor-congregational relations committee.

There are also times when I remain largely unaware of my power. I don't always notice the ways in which my white skin, for example, might lend my voice greater credibility in a conversation or afford me greater safety in certain situations. This unearned power based on how one looks is called "privilege" and, even when those who have it remain unaware of it, they continue to benefit from this power. Each of us experiences various privileges and disadvantages depending on the context or relationship we are in.

I am much more aware of when I do not have as much privilege and power compared to others (that is, when I experience disadvantage). I think of times when I, as a young person in the church, felt like my voice was not heard during various discernment processes. There were also times when I was at a disadvantage because I was a woman, when male voices overpowered mine in workplace meetings.

One time, I applied for a job that was listed as a two-year term position with benefits, including a financial top-up for maternity leave. But I was offered a contract of two years less one day, which meant no paid maternity leave. I wondered why the contract was changed by one day after my interview. Was this because I was a woman of childbearing age?

These are examples of informal power, or power related to social identity. Social identity is something we have very little control over. It is how other people view us because of what we look like, how much money we make, or the cultural background we come from, including whether we come from Russian or Swiss Mennonite families or from neither.

Our social identity is given meaning or value through the stories we tell about race, class, sexuality, gender, age, ability and so on, and we bring these stories and influences into our churches as people with those same story-formed bodies.

## I don't always notice the ways in which my white skin, for example, might lend my voice greater credibility in a conversation or afford me greater safety in certain situations.

### Valuing powerlessness

While power is neither inherently good nor inherently bad, in our history as Anabaptist-Mennonites we have often viewed power as the problem, and we have sought to be "powerless." We have interpreted Jesus' death on the cross as a sign of powerlessness and submission, and we have seen that as inspiration to be powerless too. (For more, read Susanne Guenther Loewen's article "Gelassenheit and power" at [canadian-mennonite.org/blogs/susie-guenther-loewen/gelassenheit-and-power](http://canadian-mennonite.org/blogs/susie-guenther-loewen/gelassenheit-and-power).)

During the Radical Reformation, early Anabaptists rejected abuses of power by church leaders in positions of authority, as well as a close relationship between church and state. These are views that remain important to many Mennonites to this day.

The problem is, back then and today, we lack an accompanying understanding of how power operates in the church and a vision of how it should operate. What do healthy, life-giving, nonviolent uses of power look like? How does God exercise power and how are we, as disciples of Jesus, called to use power? When we do not understand and name how power is present in the church, then power is more likely to be abused and existing inequalities will be perpetuated.

Sexual violence is an example of what can go wrong when we don't talk about power and do not have a vision of what healthy relationships of power should look like. Sexual violence is primarily an abuse of power. An excellent new resource by Mennonite Central Committee, "A Guide for Responding to Congregational Sexual Harassment and Abuse," clearly articulates the connection between sexual violence and power. It clarifies that even though it may not

be the conscious intention of the individual committing the abuse to gain power and control, sexual violence "nevertheless results in the feeling and experience of powerlessness [for the victim]; of not being able to control or have agency over one's boundaries."

The guide explains that, where there is a significant imbalance of power due to status or role, a seemingly consensual relationship may indicate a breach of fiduciary duty (for example, the responsibility of a professor for a student, of a therapist for a client, or a staff member for a congregant).

Sexual violence is power in the form of domination and control. I think of residential schools and how an estimated 5,000 people committed a sex crime at a residential school over the course of the system's 100-year existence. Why so many sexual predators? Because sexual violence is about power, it was used to maintain the existing inequality between settlers and Indigenous children by creating fear and forcing those children into staying submissive and subordinate.

When we read Scripture while paying attention to formal and informal relationships of power, we read it with new eyes. Think of the story of David and Bathsheba. Could Bathsheba, a regular citizen, and a woman in a society in which men held more power, really consent to sex with King David? What would have happened if she had said no? Given the significant power inequalities between them, it is much more likely that this is a story of rape rather than of adultery.

### Using power well

So, what do healthy relationships of power look like? There are many examples in the Bible of how God exercises power in life-giving and nonviolent relationships with humans,

## More reading

- **“A Guide for Responding to Congregational Sexual Harassment and Abuse,”** published by Mennonite Central Committee and available online at [https://abuseresponseandprevention.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/2021\\_Congregational\\_Abuse\\_Harassment\\_Guide\\_Digital.pdf](https://abuseresponseandprevention.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/2021_Congregational_Abuse_Harassment_Guide_Digital.pdf).
- **“Pastoral Abuse,”** written by Carol Penner, published by Women’s Inter-Church Council of Canada and available online at <https://wicc.org/restore/understanding-violence/pastoral-abuse/>.
- ***Women’s Bodies as Battlefield: Christian Theology and the Global War on Women***, by Susan Brooks, published by Palgrave Macmillan.
- ***Touching Our Strength: The Erotic as Power and the Love of God***, by Carter Heyward, published by Harper San Francisco.

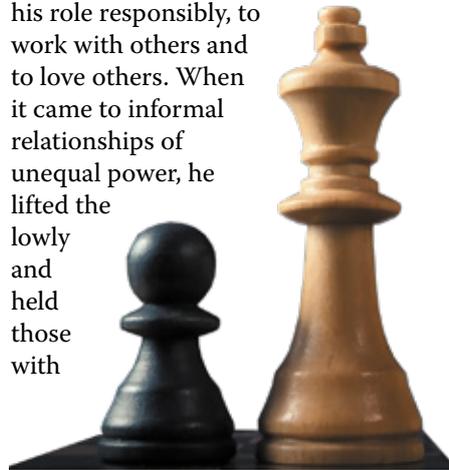
animals, water, trees, and more. From Genesis to Revelation, we can trace the Creator’s desire to be in a mutual and loving relationship with God’s good creation. God empowers humans to participate in God’s mission of reconciliation in the world!

In this relationship, we are meant to be aware of God’s power, as well as the power that God has gifted each of us to use wisely. The power that is within each of us is a power that we might call “agency,” or the ability to act in ethical ways, including the choice to choose God or not.

Jesus also modelled how to use power wisely. He demonstrated relationships of “power with” rather than “power over” others. In the healing narratives, for example, we find that Jesus worked with others to heal. In the story of the hemorrhaging woman (Mark 5: 20-30), the woman was an agent in her own healing. She reached out and touched Jesus and was healed. Jesus, the healer, was also affected by the healing. He felt it happen and addressed her about it.

As theologian Carter Heyward notes in *The Redemption of God: A Theology of Mutual Relation*, “The healing was enabled not by Jesus ‘in himself,’ but by Jesus in relation. Healing, and the intimacy that grounds it in relation, is a reciprocal process in which the healer is affected by the healed.”

Jesus used the power of his role responsibly, to work with others and to love others. When it came to informal relationships of unequal power, he lifted the lowly and held those with



greater privilege accountable.

We all exist within relationships of power, including in the church. This is not a bad thing. What we need to do is figure out what power we have and how to use it well. We can use our formal power wisely, to empower those with less informal power. When we are feeling disempowered, we can remember the inherent power within each of us—our own sense of agency.

If we are serious about being peacemakers, then we need to talk more about power. ☘



*Kimberly Penner is a pastor of Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, in Kitchener, Ont., and teaches Christian ethics at Conrad Grebel University College, in Waterloo, Ont.*

### ☘ For discussion

1. What are some examples of relationships in which you have felt disadvantaged and powerless? Can you think of situations where you had the ability to effect change but did not realize it at the time? What are some ways that power can be used to build better relationships?
2. Kimberly Penner writes, “Power, or the ability to effect change, is present in every relationship or context we find ourselves in.” Do you agree? How important is it to be aware of who holds the balance of power in an informal setting?
3. Penner says that historically Mennonites have viewed power as a problem, seeking to follow Jesus with submission and powerlessness, and that the result has been a lack of understanding of how power operates in the church. Do you agree? How healthy are the power structures in congregations you have been part of?
4. What are some stories in the New Testament where Jesus used his power? What was wise about the way he used it? Why might it be important for those being healed to participate in the event?
5. Why is it important to talk about, and be aware of, power? What is the relationship between peacemaking and power?

—By Barb Draper

See related Power resources at [www.commonword.ca/go/2739](http://www.commonword.ca/go/2739)

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## /// Readers write

### ✉ Thanks offered for 'defunding police' feature

Re: "Defund the police?" feature, Sept. 27, 2021, page 4.

Grateful to Aaron Epp and *Canadian Mennonite* for taking up this conversation, for featuring Bronwyn Dobchuk-Land's critical framing alongside reflections on how abolition overlaps with Anabaptism from David Driedger, Michael Pahl and Daniel Friesen, among others.

JONATHAN DYCK (TWITTER RESPONSE)

### ✉ Reader thankful for MC Canada leaders' stand against vaccine exemptions

Re: "No religious exemptions from COVID-19 vaccines: MC Canada" letter, Oct. 25, 2021, page 7.

I am writing to commend and thank the Mennonite Church Canada executive ministers for their clear and courageous statement on the need for those who claim to be part of the Christian community, to get vaccinated, in keeping with Christ's command to love our neighbours. The prevalence of strident "anti-vaxxers" in Christian communities in many parts of Canada is embarrassing, to say the least, and harmful to the Christian witness.

JOHN KONRAD, ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

### ✉ Social workers lauded for their efforts in Saskatchewan

Re: "Making the best of a bad situation," Oct. 25, 2021, page 26.

This was a timely article on the Driedgers' work in child welfare in Saskatchewan.

They were influential in training social workers and leaders in that department. They dealt with the challenges of abused/neglected/abandoned children. I appreciated their committed approach to the care of children and to providing permanent homes for children when parents were unable or unwilling to care for their children.

Children who face poverty, parental alcoholism and the lack of safety, whether Indigenous or not, need protection and some security. Many Mennonite families provided excellent foster care for these children during the so-called "Sixties Scoop" era; there were no other options.

Today, agencies and foster families are criticized for removing these children. This revisionist view of

history, without paying attention to the historical context, is flawed.

What do you do when the police call, saying they have young children abandoned in a car with the parents' whereabouts unknown? You start calling relatives to see if someone can take the children until the parents are located. If no one is able to care for the children, and foster care is needed, this usually initiates a series of court actions.

Otto and Florence deserve to be commended for their contribution to the social-work field, and their work in the church, locally and internationally.

HENRY NEUFELD, DELTA, B.C.

*The letter writer was a social worker in Saskatchewan for a few years and knew both Otto and Florence Driedger.*

### ✉ Natural law must balance church justice policies

Re: "Victim or perpetrator: What am I?" Nov. 22, 2021, page 12.

While I don't have the answer to Marlene Epp's question, "What am I?" I do have sympathy for the struggle she describes.

I am especially taken by her reference to Martha Nussbaum's explanation of the difficulties of finding justice and dignity when complicated by the shame and stigma useful to a social movement.

If today's church policy is not to make the same mistakes as past policies, minds more capable than mine are needed to disentangle stigma and shame from the process of establishing justice and dignity. I never learned about natural law in seminary, and I expect that it is still not part of seminary or graduate theological education.

Perhaps it's time to ask those who have been schooled in the concept to offer leadership. If not, then the pendulum of response will continue to swing and knock aside folks at either end.

I concur with Epp that review and revision of these policies are needful, the sooner the better.

ED JANZEN, NEW HAMBURG, ONT.

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

## ✉ **Decision-makers called to be accountable to the community**

Re: “Victim or perpetrator: What am I?” Nov. 22, 2021, page 12.

Marlene Epp’s response to the public judgment of her late father, Frank Epp, raises concerns about transparency and who gets to control information.

Decision-makers in controversial cases are frequently under pressure publicly and behind the scenes to favour various outcomes. That is why lawyers like to say that justice must not only be done, it should be seen to be done. The point is that decision-makers who wield power over people’s lives should be accountable to the community they serve for the basis of their decisions.

Mennonites, who prefer to locate authority in the community rather than individuals, can resonate with this legal principle. Practically, such accountability will only happen if all the relevant facts supporting a decision are publicly available. That is why in Canada almost every trial, no matter how sensitive, is open to the public.

As a journalistic organization, *Canadian Mennonite* has a special role to play, maybe even a

calling, to make visible the workings of Mennonite judgments. This calling can be advanced by:

- **Publishing information like** this article online so that it is more accessible to the growing number of people who do not read the paper copy of the magazine.
- **Ensuring the article** is referenced in the table of contents so that readers will notice there is an item of interest.
- **Dedicating an editorial** to journalistic ethics, explaining why it is in the public interest to publish sensitive information even if it is painful for people involved.
- **Engaging in investigative** reporting to make available information the community needs to evaluate judicial-type decisions by Mennonite institutions.

Epp’s experience reminds us, once again, that transparency—and publicity—is essential to good judgment.

RUSSEL SNYDER-PENNER, WATERLOO, ONT.

*The writer is a lawyer based in Kitchener, Ont.*

## ✉ **Does Jesus’ parable apply to church—or just the world?**

Re: “What if we stayed together?” feature, Dec. 6, 2021, page 4.

Should we be applying the parable of the wheat and the tares to the issue of church splits?

In light of Jesus’ explanation of this particular parable in Matthew 13:36-43, it does not appear to be correctly applied to the church because Jesus interprets the field as “the world.”

Why this is so important is because the church would be rendered powerless to separate from false teachers or the immoral if “the field” means “the church.”

If I’m missing something, I’d like to hear about it.  
ELAINE FEHR (ONLINE COMMENT)

## ✉ **Advocates sought for arsenic mitigation in Bangladesh**

I’m a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Bangladesh alumnus, concerned about where I worked in southern Bangladesh.

Severe arsenic contamination of the shallow groundwater is causing approximately 43,000 Bangladeshi deaths per year, and causing cancers,

heart and lung problems, and cognitive disorders, among others.

In the 1970s, various organizations, including MCC, assisted in conversion from surface water—often contaminated with deadly diarrheal diseases—to presumably safer ground water for drinking and irrigation, not realizing the arsenic contamination. MCC had a small arsenic mitigation program but quit after leaving the south in 2008. That area and adjacent area have the highest arsenic concentrations in Bangladesh.

South Bangladesh is very vulnerable to climate change, being near sea level. Stronger storm surges already drive salt water further inland, producing saline soils that are difficult to farm. This problem will only worsen.

MCC rightfully says it can’t do everything, but the right question is: “Why did southern Bangladesh become such a low priority?” These concerns align with MCC priorities.

On page 9 of MCC’s fall 2020 *A Common Place* magazine, it states: “MCC and its partners continue . . . helping farmers adapt to climate change; ensuring access to safe, clean water; increasing the quality of education and training . . .”

Small organizations can help. There’s much related research, but the real need is for extension, education and assistance in helping the poor adapt.

Although MCC worked in Bangladesh for 50 years, 37 in the south, it has published very little about these problems, so few constituents are aware. I've created a website ([www.arsenicbangladesh.com/](http://www.arsenicbangladesh.com/)) detailing more about Bangladesh's situation.

Advocates are needed now.

BILL SCHUMACHER, COLUMBUS, OHIO

## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Bergman**—Annalee Margaret (b. Dec. 8, 2021), to Heidi and Gary Bergman, Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

**Neufeld**—Kayden Dayle (b. Oct. 30, 2021), to Alyson and Aaron Neufeld, Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Ont.

**Pecarski**—Blakely Aleah (b. Aug. 25, 2021), to Kailey and Nick Pecarski, Poole Mennonite, Ont.

**Shantz**—Hollis Kate (b. Dec. 12, 2021), to Cody and Meggy Shantz, Wellesley Mennonite, Ont.

**Wenger**—Elliot Clarence (b. Nov. 15, 2021), to Tim and Stephanie Wenger, Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

### Baptisms

**Natalie Friesen**—Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg, Nov. 14, 2021.

### Weddings

**Byers/Ropp**—Justin Byers and Rebecca Ropp (Poole Mennonite, Ont.), at Dundee Country Club, Aug. 7, 2021.

**Fong/Reesor**—Jessica Fong and Peter Reesor, Hamilton Mennonite, Ont., Sept. 18, 2021.

**Guenther/Van Den Tempel**—Lisa Guenther and Derek Van Den Tempel (Poole Mennonite, Ont.), at St. Mary's, Ont., Sept. 24, 2021.

### Deaths

**Froese**—Rudy, 85 (b. June 21, 1936; d. Oct. 31, 2021), Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

**Epp**—Esther (nee Derksen), 77 (b. Jan. 28, 1944; d. Nov. 24, 2021), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Gascho**—Norman, 90 (b. Nov. 8, 1930; d. Oct. 28, 2021), Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

**Giesbrecht**—John, 93 (b. Jan. 18, 1928; d. Dec. 9, 2021), Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.

**Gingerich**—Verlus Ray, 87 (b. June 19, 1934; d. Nov. 17, 2021), First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

**Hamm**—Erna, 90 (b. April 24, 1931; d. Oct. 7, 2021), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Holst**—Grace (Jantzi), 94 (b. April 4, 1927; d. Nov. 3, 2021), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

**Nurmi**—Lorraine Virginia (nee Sumner), 67 (b. Feb. 4, 1954; d. Oct. 27, 2021), Wideman Mennonite, Markham, Ont.

**Rempel**—Helena, 85 (b. Oct. 9, 1936; d. Nov. 18, 2021), Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

**Riediger**—Harry, 94 (b. May 16, 1927; d. Oct. 12, 2021), Harrow Mennonite, Ont.

**Ruby**—Margaret, 95 (b. Oct. 26, 1926; d. Nov. 21, 2021), First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

**Schellenberg**—Justina, 98 (b. Nov. 16, 1922; d. Nov. 8, 2021), Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

**Schroeder**—Erna, 84 (b. Jan. 1, 1937; d. Nov. 24, 2021), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

**Shantz**—Dianne, 69 (b. Nov. 30, 1951; d. Nov. 10, 2021), Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

**Steinmann**—Elmer (Bruce), 74 (b. Nov. 18, 1947; d. Dec. 6, 2021), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

**Unruh**—John Edward, 74 (b. Oct. 3, 1945; d. Feb. 7, 2021), First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

**Weber**—Clare, 77 (b. Oct. 18, 1944; d. Nov. 1, 2021), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

*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.*



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## FROM OUR LEADERS

## Perpetual epiphany

Doug Klassen

It was a lifelong dream coming true. In a crowded stairwell I inched toward what we had all come to see. Down in the basement, below street level, the room smelled of the smoke from oil lamps dangling precariously overhead, the very place, according to tradition, where Jesus Christ was born. I was in the Grotto of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

*“Every nation under heaven”*

(Acts 2:5) surrounded me, whispering in their heart languages and chanting ancient hymns. We were all swaddled in the clothes of our culture— shawls, robes, rosaries, golf shirts, cargo pants, skirts, cowboy boots and belt buckles—that reflected the flame of the candles.

Everyone took their turn. When it was mine, I did what the others did. I knelt down in front of the beautiful brocade hangings, peered in and saw the oil lamps hanging over the 14-point silver star embedded in the marble floor.

As local custom proclaims, this was the place that *“the true God of true God”* touched down on earth as an infant. And it all happened because of the hope a young woman had in her God.

As I knelt I knew I should have been thinking about Jesus but, in that

moment, I couldn’t stop thinking about Mary. Where did she summon such wild hope? Maybe it was because she was so young.

**As I knelt I knew I should have been thinking about Jesus but, in that moment, I couldn’t stop thinking about Mary. Where did she summon such wild hope?**

Feeling the pressure of the crowd behind me, I turned and began to stand up, when there she was! I was startled. Her dark hair covered with a shawl, her olive skin. It was Mary, just like I had always imagined her. In embarrassment I looked away, but as I did I saw her again a few rows back and then again over by the stairwell. Although she was a little older and in different clothes, I could see in the eyes that it was Mary.

Back up the stairs to the main sanctuary I saw her again. Outside, the same thing. She was everywhere.

Years later, I still see her. I am in a season of perpetual epiphany. It seems that no matter which congregation in Mennonite Church Canada I worship with, no matter whom I talk to in church lobbies, no matter which

regional church gathering I attend, no matter when or where we meet with the Joint Council and executive staff, no matter who comes to visit at the offices,

or which staff member or volunteer in the nationwide church I am working with on any given day, time and time again I discover I am surrounded by people whose lives reflect those world-altering words of Mary: *“Let it be with me according to your word”* (Luke 1:38).

God bless all of you in our nationwide family of faith whose “yes” to God is witnessing to the redemption of all things (Ephesians 1:10)—God’s dream come true. ☞



*Doug Klassen is the executive minister of MC Canada.*

## A moment from yesterday



Text: Conrad Stoesz

Photo: Mennonite Heritage Archives

Problems with dancing have been discussed at numerous times in many church settings. On July 3, 1951, the Northwest Mennonite Conference delegates discussed the Alberta education system that offered lessons in various types of dancing. Delegates approved a resolution that read: *“Such teaching encourages the sensuality of our age. Teaching of these courses will establish trends and appetites within youth that will lead to excesses later in life. . . . [We] appeal to the Department of Education . . . to consider withdrawal of such courses . . . or . . . credits to students who have conscientious objections be not lessened for nonparticipation.”* This 1984 photo shows a group of Canadian Mennonite Bible College students dancing.



## THE CHURCH HERE AND THERE

## Dismay or hope?

Arli Klassen

**A**s we move into 2022, many of us look back at our experience of church last year with dismay and we look forward with hope. Or do you look back with longing, and forward with dismay? Might we look both back and forward with hope?

The last two years brought us COVID-19 restrictions, a shift to digital platforms and meeting in small groups in places other than our church buildings. Some pandemic pundits say that COVID-19 advanced all pre-existing trends by at least five years, and thus the church trends of declining numbers and budgets, aging congregations and not enough pastors may be upon us sooner than expected.

Two Anabaptist writers on this topic have held my attention during the last two years.

Henk Stenvers, the retired head of the Dutch Mennonite Church and the president-elect of Mennonite World Conference, wrote "Walking on Water" two years ago, making it clear that the European churches are far ahead of Canadians with these trends.

There are fears that the Dutch church will not survive for long, with the loss of 60 percent of its adult members over the last 20 years. He calls the remnant

to follow the example of Peter, a fisherman who walked away from fishing, and walk on water with our eyes fixed on Jesus.

He speaks of changing church to become "centred sets," communities without clear boundaries, gathered around a clear identity and a circle of engaged people. Commitment is not anchored in believing the same things, but in belonging to God and each other. A later booklet in honour of his retirement, entitled *Dancing on Water*, calls for the church to thrive by dancing with the unknown and the uncertain, letting go of the past and finding new ways to be church.

Conrad Kanagy, an American sociologist and Mennonite minister, recently published a series of books called *A Church Dismantled: A Kingdom Restored*. He says the signs of decline are everywhere in the American church, which he attributes to the work of God taking apart the institutionalized church as we know it, in order to rebuild the church in a different way that will build God's kingdom.

Both of these writers talk about letting go of what used to work in a thriving past in order to move into a future church with hope.

I worry that there will be more splintering as we look to the future of the church. Divisions are sometimes an easier way to face decline, dealing instead with differences around doctrine/theology, politics or worship styles.

I believe it is the Spirit who brings us together as church, across all these divides. Yes, we need to let go of many ways of doing church that were institutionalized in the last century. We want to find ways to come together as a movement, experiencing God's love together through mystery and imagination, dancing on water like Peter. We found creative ways to do so throughout this pandemic. Yes, there is loss, fear and sadness, but there is also faith and hope in what lies ahead for the church.

A Dutch hymn, written by Sytze de Vries, is included in *Dancing on Water*, speaking to this future: "Dear God, be spoken of / when we are deeply silenced. / Where your Spirit stirs our hearts / the song blossoms in our mouths / in the middle of winter. / We know: summer is coming!"

"Not what's in front of our eyes fills our dreams, / Not what's at hand shows us the way. / But You, having found our hearts, / You have promised us the future!" ❧



*Arli Klassen is privileged to learn from Anabaptist churches around the world. She can be reached at [klassenarli@gmail.com](mailto:klassenarli@gmail.com).*

## Et cetera

## Musician Steve Bell invested into the Order of Manitoba

Winnipeg singer-songwriter Steve Bell has received Manitoba's highest honour. In October, Lieutenant-Governor Janice Filmon invested Bell and 11 other Manitobans into the Order of Manitoba. Established in 1999, the Order of Manitoba honours people who have demonstrated excellence and achievement, thereby enriching the social, cultural or economic well-being of the province and its residents. Since 1989, Bell has released more than 20 albums and has received numerous Juno Awards, Western Canadian Music Awards and Gospel Music Association Covenant Awards. Along the way, he has used his platform to draw attention to a variety of humanitarian causes. Bell's most recent album is 2020's *Wouldn't You Love to Know?* His song "Holy Lord" is included in the *Voices Together* hymnal.



PHOTO COURTESY OF STEVE BELL

*Steve Bell was invested into the Order of Manitoba in 2021.*

## LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

# She'll be coming 'round the mountain when she comes

Troy Watson

I've never seen mist move in so quickly. A multitude of mysterious wisps just appeared out of nowhere, advancing swiftly across the rolling hills before me like an army of ghosts. It was stunning, haunting, beautiful.

I put my jacket and boots on, then stepped outside to wander through it, to feel it rushing by. I didn't feel anything though. Not even a breeze. It was baffling. Where this curious army of ghosts came from, where it was going and how it was moving forward was an enigma that reminded me of the Holy Ghost.

The movement of the Holy Ghost is a mystery. I've had many experiences in which I've sensed and felt the presence of the Holy Ghost, but I've come to accept we can't fully understand or predict the how, why, when or where of her movement.

Like this mist, she'll be coming 'round the mountain when she comes.

*(Note: I don't think God has gender so I call God her, him and them. I mix it up just to remind myself I don't know as much about God as I think I do.)*

It feels strange now to call the Spirit the Holy Ghost, but that's what we called him when I was a kid. I'm not sure why everyone started saying Holy Spirit instead of Holy Ghost. It just demonstrates how malleable, limited and transitory language is, especially when we're talking about the Infinite, who is beyond time and space, let alone our fumbling attempts to define and describe them.

Our obsession with the right way to talk about God would be comical if it weren't so tragic at times. What it really is, though, is idolatry. We end up worshipping the words as much as what

they point us to. We mistake "the finger pointing to the moon, for the moon" as the Buddhist saying goes.

Speaking of the moon, last night I couldn't sleep, so I went outside. It was 3 a.m. The dim lights of the distant chalets on the opposing mountainside evoked a candlelight-vigil vibe, and overhead was the most beautiful Van Gogh-esque starry night I'd ever seen. The crescent moon hanging low over

the bay; the flickering reflection of light upon the water; the sky full of stars, so bright, so numerous, so vast.

It's a shame we rarely get to see the night sky in its full glory. We rarely wander outside past midnight for starters but, even if we did, its true majesty remains veiled due to light pollution where most of us live.

It's a curious notion that too much light can be a negative thing. I wondered if this was true spiritually as well.

Over the past few years I've examined my need for the bright light of God's presence in my life. Throughout this pandemic it's felt like God has withdrawn a bit.

This isn't the first time I've experienced this, but it hasn't shaken me as much this time around. I have more faith now, I think. I know God is here, even when God seems hidden and silent.

I no longer feel the need to try to coerce God to "show up." I trust God will "show up" when, where and how

God deems best. This has made life less stressful. Constantly seeking and striving to sense God's presence can be exhausting.

A few days ago I prayed Psalm 23, and the words "for thou art with me" washed over me like summer rain. I know God is everywhere: in the mountains, in the city, in me. Even when I can't sense or feel him, God is with me. Always.

It isn't that God comes and goes,

**I no longer feel the need to try to coerce God to "show up." I trust God will "show up" when, where and how God deems best. This has made life less stressful.**

that's just my experience, my limited perspective. Yet once in a while, it's like God steps out of the quietness and overwhelms me with her beauty and grace.

Last night it was like God herself was shining down upon me under that radiant night sky and filling me up.

It reminded me: God likes to surprise us. It reminded me that it requires the darkness of night to experience the more subtle nature of God's beauty and grace. The moon and stars are God's light too, but you can't see them in the bright light of the sun. It reminded me to chill out and wait patiently for the Most High. For she'll be coming 'round the mountain when she comes. ✎



*Troy Watson is slowly learning to chill out and wait patiently.*

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

# A survivor of sexual abuse speaks out

By Andrea De Avila

**Y**et again, I read last month about another pastor, an Anabaptist leader at that, being accused of sexual misconduct. It was Bruxy Cavey, pastor of The Meeting House, a Be in Christ megachurch. I thought to myself: “yet again.”

Our denomination, has also had, has, and will have, pastors among our congregations who will be awkward, cross the lines, manipulate and even abuse those whom they have said they would serve.

And yes, many of the safety guards and protocols that we’ve tried to implement in the past few years—or perhaps even decades—in our congregations will help us better protect many in our flock.

We need to make particularly sure that we have these in place for those who cannot always speak for themselves and are the most vulnerable, such as children, refugees and people with disabilities.

“Yet again,” misconduct cases will pop up in congregations as long as the church is made up of humans. As I’ve come to understand, there are a couple of reasons for that. One is that being a pastor is attractive to those who like having power over others. Not only is it a position of high regard and responsibility, but it also allows them access to vulnerable people whom they may easily manipulate. This is why it is important to have thorough background checks, references and accountability groups for pastors. It is also important to hold them to the same standards of safety and accountability as one would with anyone else in the congregation.

Second, we now live in a time when victims, survivors of abuse, perhaps feel safer and more empowered to come

forward and hold their perpetrators accountable. It is not that these things did not happen 20, 30, 40, 50, 60 years ago. We know that. I hope you know that. But times have changed, and survivors are now risking the potential shaming of their communities to hold pastors and the church accountable for

**I say all these things not so others take pity on me. I do not need anyone’s pity. I am a fighter who comes from a long line of women fighters. Fierce pacifist women at that!**

the sins committed against them.

The problem that I’ve kept running into when these cases come up—and we need to have these hard conversations—is that people keep saying: “Yet again? When are we going to be able to stop dealing with these cases?”

And just like that, as a victim of abuse myself, as a survivor who was never able to hold the perpetrator accountable, a little voice in my head says: “Not worth it.”

I have to fight that voice. I am a fierce pacifist, which is to say that I don’t believe violence is the answer to anything, but I won’t go down easy either. I am also a fighter. I have fought mental-health issues for half of my life, due in part to sexual assault and abuse. Every day I fight the brightness of the day because I am more comfortable in the dimness of the light, where my body does not attract as much attention and my eyes do not have to squint.

I fight every day to get out of bed and face the world because my bed is the most comfortable place for me, since the outside, as adventurous and attractive as it may seem, can also be so

overwhelming and exhausting. I fight every day to allow myself the intimacy with others that I wish to have, that trauma sometimes does not allow me to properly enjoy. I fight every day to not let myself slip away because of what was done to me.

I say all these things not so others

take pity on me. I do not need anyone’s pity. I am a fighter who comes from a long line of women fighters. Fierce pacifist women at that!

I say these things so that the next time you hear of another case of misconduct making the news, your reaction is not one of annoyance. Your annoyance will not affect the perpetrator. Your annoyance will not fix the problem. Your annoyance will not make the church safer.

Your annoyance, however, may communicate to victims that what happened to them is a mere inconvenience to you. You don’t mean it that way, you may argue, but that wouldn’t change the result. Besides, I’m already fighting many things you can fend off “yet again.”



*Andrea De Avila, is an associate pastor of Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church in Winnipeg (Treaty 1 Territory). She has a master’s degree in theological studies from Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg.*

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

## A small town that cares

Christina Bartel Barkman

The recent floods in southern British Columbia have wreaked havoc in many ways, devastating towns and roads, and deeply impacting communities.

In the face of this disaster, our small town of Yarrow, in Chilliwack, B.C., has been a source of safety and support for many. Our community has worked together to help each other, and it has been beautiful and inspiring to watch and participate in.

On the morning of Nov. 16, our whole community of more than 3,000 people was told to immediately evacuate. I remember waking up that morning thinking the worst of the rain was over and was hopeful to see that the nine inches of water in our crawl space had receded.

But we soon learned that the record-breaking rainfall had caused the Nooksack River in Washington State to flood into Canada, and a breach in the dike in Abbotsford meant the nearby Sumas Prairie—which had been a lake prior to its draining from 1920 to '24—was flooded, and the water was heading towards Yarrow.

We immediately packed our bags and frantically carried valuable items and keepsakes upstairs. Driving away, with our four young children, I felt the same fear and anxiety that so many in B.C. felt that day: Would we come back to devastation or a dry house?

With imminent danger of more flooding, hundreds of volunteers sandbagged the Barrowtown pumping station throughout the night, and saved Yarrow and the surrounding area from further catastrophic flooding and Sumas Lake from returning.

We were incredibly grateful to return home the next day to a dry house, unlike so many in B.C. who lost their homes and livelihood.

With Yarrow residents home, we were

now capable of helping those at the outskirts of our town who were still struggling with rising water levels at the edge of the Sumas Prairie flood.

My husband quickly sprang into action, ready to help sandbag at a nearby farm. While helpful neighbours and my oldest son drove 25 minutes into downtown Chilliwack to pick up sandbags that the City of Chilliwack was providing, my husband decided to stay in Yarrow and work on a more efficient plan. He called a friend who had a dump truck, asked another friend to pick up a pallet of empty sandbags, and invited volunteers via Facebook to sandbag.

Within an hour we had three loads of sand and hundreds of volunteers in our church parking lot. The church basement was full of baking and coffee for the volunteers, and a command centre evolved in the church kitchen, dispatching the volunteers to the next home or farm that needed sandbagging. The City of Chilliwack responded to our efforts by bringing in more loads of sand, and that evening volunteers sandbagged more than 10 homes and farms. The town was mobilized and it kept growing from there.

One family that was helped that day wrote a thank-you post on Facebook to the 200 people who showed up at their farm to sandbag: “Your help has saved our livelihood and our sanity. What you have done for our family is literally unbelievable and we will never be able to thank you enough.”

After that initial effort, our local churches and community members continued to work together to establish a flood-relief centre, two food banks with groceries and prepared meals, a database of volunteers that can be dispatched when a need is called in, financial assistance to evacuated families, a childcare program, free clothes and cleaning supplies, bins in

the community to dispose of flood-damaged drywall for free, and continued help with sandbagging and now cleaning and rebuilding.

My husband, who is the pastor of Yarrow United Mennonite Church, has a master's degree in peacebuilding and collaborative development, and we have seven years of experience doing relief and development work in the Philippines with Mennonite Church Canada, but never did we expect this education and experience to be so valuable in leading in our local Canadian context.

The value of community that leaders have built in Yarrow for generations is bearing fruit. Because the churches and community members have worked together for years in many ways, we were prepared to cohesively and effectively care for each other in a time of unexpected crisis.

John M. Perkins, a leading evangelical voice to come out of the American civil rights movement, says, “The church lives out its call most fully when it is a community of faith with arms wrapped about a community of pain.”

The churches of Yarrow, together, are wrapping arms around our community and allowing those in pain to breathe a little lighter. This is a beautiful way of being the church, of being a community that cares.

*B.C. flood recovery donations can be sent to Mennonite Central Committee at donate.mccc.ca/cause/bc-flood-response-2021.*



*Christina Bartel Barkman is a former Canadian Mennonite columnist.*

# 'Super flour' saves the day for children in Nepal

By Jason Dueck  
Mennonite Central Committee

There is a jar on a kitchen shelf in Sumitra Chepang's kitchen that has a secret identity. By all outward appearances, it may appear to be just a jar of mild-mannered flour, but under the lid is something much more spectacular: "super flour!"

And while this "super flour" isn't wearing a cape, it is changing the lives of thousands of young children in Nepal.

Chepang lives in a rural village called Syammaidada, not far from the capital city of Kathmandu. Her family's regular income came from selling produce, but pandemic restrictions have eliminated their ability to bring it to market.

Without that regular income, her family—Chepang, her husband and their six children—often didn't have enough to eat. Food insecurity is a major issue in Nepal, especially the rural areas, with nearly 40 percent of children under five having their growth stunted due to malnutrition.

But Mennonite Central Committee

(MCC) donors have empowered an MCC partner, Shanti Nepal, to help.

Through MCC's account at the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, Chepang was given a supply of pre-made "super flour" to ensure her children were getting the nutrients they need to grow healthily. But it's more than just a delivery service. Shanti Nepal also taught her how to make "super flour" herself.

"I used to make simple rice flour to feed my young children," says Chepang. "I was not aware about eating a balanced diet, but now I learned about eating three food groups in a meal. I also learned to make 'super flour,' kitchen gardening and healthy behaviours."

"Super flour" is a catch-all term for a blend of flours from grains, pulses and proteins. It is loaded with the calories, protein, calcium and iron that young children need, and it is easy to make, store and prepare. The "super flour" Chepang makes is a combination of corn, wheat and soybean that she roasts and grinds herself before storing.

If she adds water—or heated milk for her older children—to the "super flour," she can easily make a tasty "super porridge" that doesn't require any additional cooking. She says her children love the "super porridge" because it is so versatile, and her 10-month-old daughter, Promisa, has been eating it since she turned six months old.

"It tastes mild without adding other flavour," says Chepang, 35. "But I make it in different tastes, adding sugar or salt and leafy vegetables or fruits based on the season and



SHANTI NEPAL PHOTO BY SHANTI CHEPANG

**Sumitra Chepang prepares a small batch of 'super porridge' to feed to some of her younger children, in the village of Syammaidada, Nepal.**

availability. Promisa wants to change the taste often."

"The adaptability and ease of storage of "super flour" has helped thousands of children in Nepal achieve healthy growth and a nutritional balance they might not have achieved without it.

## Shanti Nepal's recipe for 'super flour'

- 2 parts soybeans
- 1 part wheat
- 1 part rice (or maize, depending on availability)

Dry roast—no butter or oil—each ingredient separately, then grind to make a fine flour. Mix all three types of flour together well and store in a clean jar with a tight lid on it.

To prepare "super porridge," mix the super flour in water that's been boiled and has cooled slightly, stirring it so that it becomes fine porridge. For slightly older children, use milk, if available, instead of water and it can be eaten immediately. Add sugar or salt, as preferred by the child. Fruit chunks or garden vegetables can be added, if available and preferred. ☘



SHANTI NEPAL PHOTO BY SHANTI CHEPANG

**Sumitra Chepang feeds a spoonful of 'super porridge' to her 10-month-old daughter, Promisa, in their home in the village of Syammaidada, Nepal, while one of her other daughters, Ritu, watches.**

# 'A glimmer of hope in their eyes'

*MDS responds to flooding in Princeton, B.C.*

Story and Photos by John Longhurst  
Mennonite Disaster Service

**"T**he Mennonites are coming!"

That was the buzz around the town of Princeton, B.C., in early December 2021, when the first 16 Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) volunteers arrived to help residents hard hit by flooding in mid-November.

People in the town are "so exhausted," said Spencer Coyne, Princeton's mayor. But knowing help was arriving put "a glimmer of hope in their eyes."

The volunteers, who came from British Columbia, Alberta and Manitoba, spent a week helping residents pump out water, muck out basements and dispose of damaged items.

As he drove around town, seeing the MDS vehicles "made me smile," Coyne said. "I was grinning ear to ear."

Knowing help was arriving made Coyne feel better, but he knows there is still a long way to go.

Sitting in his office, the mayor listed off the challenges:

- **About 300** families displaced.
- **The water** still unsafe to drink.
- **The sewage** system not fully working yet.
- **Still working** on the natural gas supply.

Despite that, the town is pulling together.

"We are a small town, we know each other, we help each other," Coyne said.

An important part of that effort is Princeton Baptist Church, which is the hub for the town's recovery efforts.

"We've leaned on them pretty hard," said Coyne, of how the town asked the church and its pastor, Kyle Nichols, to take the lead in various recovery efforts. "Kyle is awesome. He's the heart of the community. The church knows who needs the most help. Honest to God, I don't know where'd we be without that church."

For Nichols, it was just a matter of doing



*Joy Dougans, left, Alvin Klassen, right, and Keith Rudance, in the back, discuss their next move in the cleanup operations*

what the church is supposed to do. "We told the town we would do whatever we could do to help," he said.

The church, located on a hill above the town, is the only one still fully operational in Princeton. Another one closed in summer, two others were flooded and the fourth lost its pastor to COVID-19 in late November.

Today, the church is the town's main food bank, used clothing depot, firewood distribution centre and volunteer clearing house. It is also the place to go for clean water, with a water truck and pallets of bottled water in the parking lot for residents.

"We are just happy to help," said Nichols of his congregation, part of the Fellowship

Baptist Church denomination. "This is a time for the church to come alongside the community and serve them and give a message of hope."

The church is also home base for MDS, which has parked its office trailer and tool container in the parking lot.

In front of the trailer is a hand-written sign that says: "We are here to help you. Home clean-up and muck out (no cost, no obligation). Come on in."

If nobody was in the office, people were directed to Tia Tolmie, volunteer coordinator at the church.

"My job is to get people on a list for help," she said.

Like the mayor, Tolmie sees the toll the disaster is taking on residents. "I'm



The MDS trailer parked in Princeton, B.C.

definitely starting to see tiredness, physically and emotionally," she said.

Carolyn Riel coordinates the food and clothing bank for the church. "Now that immediate crisis is over, the enormity of the loss is now hitting people," she said, adding that there currently is a need for mental-health support. "Talking and listening to people is so important," she added.

Denis Sabourin knows how vital that is. The semi-retired cartographer, who also works as facilities manager at The Meeting Place, a Mennonite Brethren congregation in Winnipeg, was part of the first group of volunteers to arrive in Princeton.

"We aren't just rebuilding homes, we're rebuilding hope," said Sabourin, who has done a total of 15 MDS service trips. "We do that by listening to people. It's healing for them to know someone wants to hear their story. We have so much to give just by listening."

For Coyne, knowing MDS is in town

gives people hope. "Sometimes we feel so alone here, so remote," he said. "The fact MDS came here to help our community, assisting people who might otherwise not receive help, is absolutely invaluable," he said. "People feel like a weight is being shifted off their shoulders."

Looking ahead, he knows there's a long way to go.

"There are a lot of homes to be rebuilt," the mayor said. "A lot of people lost everything. They've got nothing."

But, like a family, "we'll still be here, doing what we have to do," he said. And if anyone wants to volunteer with MDS to help, "you can be part of our family, too." ❧

*People interested in volunteering for the Princeton recovery efforts can contact Kelsey Friesen (kfriesen@mds.org) or call toll-free 1-866-261-1274.*



A sign in Princeton, B.C., lists the locations where the water is contaminated and should not be consumed.

# Ethiopian Mennonites killed, churches burned

By Will Braun  
Senior Writer

**M**ore than 400 Mennonite churches in Ethiopia have been affected by civil strife that started in November 2020. Though information is hard to verify and numbers will likely rise, about eight Mennonite churches have been burned and eight church members have died, including two full-time ministers.

This according to Pastor Desalegn Abebe, president of Meserete Kristos Church (MKC), the Anabaptist denomination in Ethiopia.

With more than 660,000 members spread over 1,135 local churches and 1,112 church-planting centres, MKC is the largest national Anabaptist body in the world, by far.

MKC congregations are spread throughout every state in the country of 115 million people and include people from the various ethnic groups within Ethiopia.

Speaking by video call from Addis Ababa, Abebe said that contact with churches in the conflict zones in the north and west of the country has been largely lost, although bits of information trickle out.

In addition to deaths and destruction of churches, confiscation of property, lack of food and medical supplies, and displacement of people and communities are major concerns.

According to a Dec. 17 United Nations statement, it is “likely that more than 400,000 people in Tigray were living in famine-like conditions.” The northern state of Tigray is where the conflict started. The violence has spread to the western Amhara and Afar regions. The UN says at least two million people have been displaced and “many of them are not receiving the assistance they need to stay alive.”

MKC has staff enacting a crisis-management strategy, which includes trying to determine the extent of the damage.

Last June, Abebe and other church



PHOTO COURTESY OF MENNONITE  
WORLD CONFERENCE

**Pastor Desalegn Abebe, president of  
Meserete Kristos Church.**

leaders took advantage of a ceasefire to go to Tigray. He spoke about offering a time of trauma healing for 19 church leaders. The trip also provided opportunity for a unique baptism (*see sidebar*).

Wherever the suffering is, Abebe emphasizes that the whole church is affected. “A difficulty for one church is a difficulty for all of us,” he said.

Now that is multiplied by 400 churches, plus many church-planting centres.

The latter generally consist of a full-time minister but not enough members to be classified by MKC as a church.

Abebe’s message to his people is simple: “Let us work for peace.” He said peace does not surface out of the blue; it requires work. The church must speak and act. “Silence is a sin of omission,” he said.

MKC has been “knocking on doors of government and religious leaders,” Abebe said. The church conducted a national

peace dialogue with Christian leaders from different denominations.

MKC also embodies peaceful coexistence as its membership cuts across the various ethnic lines that play significantly into the current conflict. Part of the MKC crisis-management strategy is to ensure that the church is inclusive in terms of accommodating people from every walk of life, whatever their education or ethnicity.

Abebe noted that everyone is created the way they are by God and people cannot change the colour of their skin or ethnic background. “We are different in many ways,” he said. “This is a beauty, God created it this way. . . . [We] should not fight about that which we cannot change.”

Of course, “this does not mean there are no problems,” Abebe said. MKC has “peace ambassadors” in many local churches. These people have training in conflict resolution, trauma healing and how to bring people from different backgrounds together.

When asked about his message for Mennonites in North America, Abebe said “It’s now time to stand firm with truth, to speak it out, even die for it.”

As with any conflict, competing narratives drive the strife. And, as Abebe stated, this plays out beyond the borders of Ethiopia. “I am hopeful that American politicians will come to their right mind and do the right thing instead of adding fuel on the burning fire,” he said.

In a call for international solidarity, Abebe stated: “We are Anabaptists who stand for truth. . . . Let us stand and speak together the same language; let the truth prevail. Let us say no to evil. We can’t stop all evil, but let us do our level best.”

He also requested spiritual support. “Pray for us,” he said, noting especially the people mourning loved ones and the uncertainty ahead. “What comes next, we do not really know,” he said.

Numerous North American Anabaptist groups, including Mennonite Church Canada, recently sent a letter of solidarity to MKC. “It’s our daily prayer and for peace and unity and prosperity to be restored for your country,” the letter reads.

“I am happy that we are not alone,” said Abebe, “that makes me feel good inside.”

There are seven Ethiopian churches within Mennonite Church Canada—six in Ontario and one in Alberta. Many of the people in these congregations are first-generation Canadians and their ties to Ethiopia are strong. The conflict is affecting them deeply. ❧

*Mennonite Church Canada has established an emergency fund to provide assistance to MKC congregations in need. To contribute, email Norm Dyck at ndyck@mcec.ca or call toll-free 1-855-476-2500 ext. 707.*

## FIRST-PERSON ACCOUNT

# Baptism in a barrel

BY DESALENG ABEBE

Mennonite Word Conference

It is very difficult to go to the northern part of Ethiopia after the war broke out. Despite the security concerns, when I heard that members of our church in western Tigray were in difficult conditions, I organized a team. We would go there to show our love for Meserete Kristos Church (MKC) members in the area.

The situation is dire. Pre-war infrastructure, housing and commercial activity are no longer there. It’s empty.

We were able to visit the towns where MKC local churches still exist. At a place called Abduraf, there was a new convert who received training in basic Christian doctrines and was ready for water baptism. Unfortunately, before he was baptized, the war broke out. Church leaders were scattered; the new believer could not get water baptism.

When we visited the area, this new believer came and asked me to baptize him. When I inquired about his testimony, the local believers told me that he had learned the truth but had not yet been baptized.

We often baptize people in a river or in a big bathtub. Neither was available in the area. I told him that baptism was not possible there.

The new believer thought a little and told me that I could baptize him in a barrel.

But there was scarcity of water in the area. Undeterred, he and other believers

purchased jerkins of water and filled the barrel with water.

Then I began to wonder how this man could get into a barrel. He replied, “I have military training, I can.”

The believers brought me a white robe with a cross for me to look like a priest. They also brought one for the new believer. I dressed him in a white robe with a cross and baptized him in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

To my surprise, he was filled with the Holy Spirit as soon as he got out of the barrel. I was amazed! I had never seen a person filled with the Holy Spirit in such a difficult situation.

Everyone thanked God. We forgot that we were in an insecure zone. We all felt God’s presence.

What was happening seemed to be like watching a drama, not a reality. It was a unique incident to witness.

After he was baptized, the believers received him by singing. They gave him hugs one by one and said, “Congratulations.”

Our brother rejoiced that he was baptized. “In an impossible situation, God opened the way for me to be baptized,” he said. “This day is historic for me. God sent the president of our church to baptize me.”

God is everywhere, regardless of the situations and is doing God’s

business when we are willing to go into the world and share the good news to people. ❧



PHOTO COURTESY OF MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE

*Pastor Desalegn Abebe, president of Meserete Kristos Church, baptizes a new believer in a barrel during a ceasefire in the Ethiopian civil strife.*

# Warm but not fuzzy in 2050

*Eight interviews about climate*

By Will Braun  
Senior Writer

Climate change has been on the agenda of our global village for a generation. The science, the discourse and the mood have shifted over time. As has reality. What was once a dark cloud in the distance has become an atmospheric river overhead.

At this particular moment, with the so-called “last chance” UN climate conference in Glasgow now behind us—an event reported on with the usual mix of grasping optimism and sceptical resignation—I asked eight people for their views on the climate crisis.

I asked several young people if they

think about what the world and their lives will be like in 2050.

“Absolutely,” says Sarah Wood, a 17-year-old student at Rosthern (Sask.) Junior College.

“Yeah,” says Maya Morton Ninomiya, a University of Waterloo (Ont.) student, less enthusiastically.

“I spend a disproportionate amount of time thinking about the future . . . imagining worst-case scenarios.” At the same time, she knows she needs to be “grounded in the moment rather than working from the terrifying unknown.” Thinking even further ahead, she wonders

about people from whom climate crisis will be their starting point in life.

Hayden Epp says he is not the kind of person who thinks about the future a lot, although the fourth-year student at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, says, “When I do, I don’t have warm and fuzzy feelings.”

Jonas Cornelsen has one grandpa who died at 101 and another headed in that direction, so he figures he better be thinking long term. He is 28 now, so the 2080s or even 2090s may well be in his genes. “I do fear for what that may look like,” he says.



PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA PHOTO (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

***Flooding in British Columbia on Nov 22.***



B.C. MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE PHOTO (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

*Highway 1 in British Columbia was washed out by severe rain on Nov. 17.*

He also wonders what the world will be like for his kids. If he has any. Climate change is one of the factors he and his partner consider when discussing the possibility of having kids. His friends talk about it too.

“What are the prospects of the generation of kids we would raise?” he asks. Will the world be one they would want to live in?

Cornelsen says there are still lots of good reasons to have kids, and he has “gotten past the notion that having kids is irresponsible,” but he surely feels a “moral responsibility” to the kids of the future, whether they are his own or not.

Like Cornelsen, Ava Wood, Sarah’s 15-year-old sister, thinks about her own future as well as the future of those who will come after her. She says her concern is particularly for the intense climate impacts that her grandkids “will probably have to face.”

She also talks about the heat and lack of rain last summer in her area of Saskatchewan, as well as abnormal winter weather.

These noticeable changes help make something that can seem abstract much more immediate.

Similarly, Morton Ninomiya, who is currently at a work placement in Vancouver, talks about how the waves of extreme weather in B.C. have made the climate crisis hard to ignore.

### **What role do people see for the church?**

Sarah says it is really important for her to hear about climate from a Christian perspective. Her message to church leaders and parents is simple: “Keep having the conversations. Don’t be shy or think that it is too late, or that it does not matter.” And to other youth, she says, “We are not too young to help.”

Christen Kong talks both about her own church—Toronto Chinese Mennonite—and the broader church. She is a grad student at the University of Toronto. She speaks of the community gardens and pollinator garden on their church grounds. “Our church invited the community to

build a relationship with the environment,” she says, “which, in turn, emboldened community resolve towards tending to their local environments and prioritizing the welfare of all of living beings.”

More broadly, she says, “I believe Mennonites can harness their knowledge of nonviolent negotiation, mediation, restorative justice and peace as assets when mending the relationship with our natural environment.”

Juliana Morillo, a member of the Mennonite World Conference Creation Care Task Force, says that environmental issues are not discussed a lot in her home church in Bogotá, Colombia, although she is part of a creation-care working group there. In her context, she says that environmental concerns are often overshadowed by other issues, including the violence and upheaval in

Colombia following the collapse of the 2016 peace accord.

In Saskatchewan, Kirsten Hamm-Epp is helping to organize two climate-related events for youth within the regional church. The intent, she says, is to help provide them with language and tools “to sift through what they’re hearing, and to do so through the lens of a follower of Jesus.” After laying that groundwork, they will talk about how to use those tools.

“We’re beyond the point of needing to say this is important,” notes Hamm-Epp.

In Cornelsen’s mind, the task now is to “shape a generation that does not take our planet for granted.”

Back in Ontario, Hayden Epp, like the other young-ish people I spoke with, is not inclined to rant or point fingers at older generations. His tone is more matter-of-fact than urgent, including when he speaks of church response to the climate crisis: “[It’s] something that’s gonna have to happen at some point, so why not get on it.”

# ‘Courageous Imagination’

*Year-long discernment process described as ‘shared experience that will transform us’*

By Janet Bauman  
Eastern Canada Correspondent  
KITCHENER, ONT.

It is “progress report” time, partway through Mennonite Church Eastern Canada’s year-long discernment process, “Courageous Imagination: A journey together listening for God” was initiated last spring by the executive council of the regional church, noting that the last strategic plan was developed in 2014, and the current vision and mission statement was written in 2005.

Leaders are using Isaiah 43:19 as a guiding text: “See, I am doing a new thing! Do you not perceive it? I am making a way . . .”

This journey of listening for where God is at work began with a prayer gathering and includes 10 podcast episodes on a variety of topics. It has generated feedback that has been summarized into key themes, and draft identity and priority statements.

During October and November, MC Eastern Canada hosted eight regional gatherings, inviting responses to these draft statements. Particularly meaningful for Leah Reesor-Keller, because they were among her first in-person connections since she began her role as executive minister of the regional church, the meetings involved more than 160 people from 56 congregations, and included opportunities to participate online and



PHOTO BY YEABSRA AGONFER

*Cathrin van Sintern-Dick, MC Eastern Canada’s regional minister, centre, talks with Faith Glover, left, and Rielly McLaren at at Faith Mennonite Church in Leamington, Ont., at one of eight regional ‘Courageous Imagination’ gatherings last fall.*

in French.

There was good energy and engagement, according to Reesor-Keller. “Each conversation . . . was filled with hopefulness and deep insight,” she says, including both “affirmation for the general direction of the identity statements and priorities,” along with “suggestions for refining them.”

For Mollie Moua, who is the project manager for “Courageous Imagination,” building connections through relationships is key to this process, especially as the regional church “moves further into

the intercultural vision . . . that we are trying to achieve together.” Moua says, “It’s the relationships that will transform us.” Hearing individual stories helps to make those connections.

God is calling the church together to be open to see what God is doing inside and outside of church walls, and to be receptive to learning, growing and being transformed. Moua says she hears a desire “to move outside of our comfort zones . . . to move from being insular to being a church that is looking outwards.”

The notes from those fall meetings are being distilled now in order to refine statements about shared values and the mission of MC Eastern Canada going forward, as well as to name key priorities. Several common themes arose, including becoming more:

- **Diverse, intercultural,** inclusive and welcoming.
- **Open to** learning, growth and transformation led by the Spirit.
- **Engaged in** the world together through



PHOTO BY MOLLIE MOUA

*Leah Reesor-Keller, MC Eastern Canada’s executive minister, standing at the mic, addresses a ‘Courageous Imagination’ regional gathering held at Ottawa Mennonite Church last fall.*

Anabaptist-Mennonite discipleship.

- **Centred and grounded** in Jesus through Scripture and relationship.

There was a common concern expressed for how to provide spiritual nourishment, resources and support for children, youth and young adults.

Another shared priority is that faith rooted in Anabaptism “calls us to action,” says Reesor-Keller, but there is diversity in community around that. There are strong voices that say the church has to be “out there living into that call for shalom, for everyone, for all creation.” She says she is hearing a desire for the church “to engage and lead on responding to the challenging topics of our day,” such as anti-racism, climate change, poverty and affordable housing.

Others, she says, are “saying we have to be telling the story of who God is and who Jesus is and inviting others into God’s transforming love.” Somehow congregants and church leaders are still “centring ourselves around God,” and, as the Body of Christ, “following Jesus together.”

The regional church’s executive team and executive council members have already begun the work of drafting and refining summary statements and identifying priorities. They continue to ask, “how can we say this better,” while “really listening for God in the process.”

Reesor-Keller invites prayers “as we take the next steps in refining . . . new identity statements and strategic priorities on the road towards the annual church gathering on April 29 to 30, 2022.”

“It’s a scary time and there are a lot of unknowns,” says Reesor-Keller, but there is a lot of “hopeful, forward focused” energy around who the church can be and how it can “find new purpose” as “we recommit ourselves to following Jesus in our community and our neighbourhood.”

In this yearlong listening journey, she sees new opportunities, along with the strength of tradition, to rely on contributing to a willingness to be transformed and embrace new possibilities. “We don’t know what the path forward looks like, but we know we want to walk it together,” she says. ☸

## News brief

### Global Youth Summit leaders conducting national survey



PHOTO BY SANDY YUEN

**Christen Kong, Global Youth Summit delegate for MC Canada and youth mentor, speaks at Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church.**

Mennonite World Conference’s Global Youth Summit (GYS), an international assembly that provides a platform for young Anabaptists adults, aged 18 to 30 years, to share insights and learnings, has given delegates the task of conducting a national survey to amplify the voices of young Anabaptist youth and adults relating to this year’s theme, “Life in the Spirit: Learn, serve, worship.” The survey seeks to investigate prevalent issues and challenges experienced by young Anabaptists while developing strategies about specific actions that can be achieved. In addition, each team of delegates is compiling stories about the meaning of the Holy Spirit for people in their area, to better understand common threads across Canada. Mennonite Church Canada’s delegates are Klassen Brown, MC Manitoba; Madison Harms, MC Saskatchewan; Rebecca Janzen, MC Alberta; Ashley Rempel, MC British Columbia; and Christen Kong, MC Eastern Canada. They are calling on pastors, youth leaders and young Anabaptists across the country to take part in this national survey. They hope to capture a diversity of Canadian voices representative of this country for the upcoming GYS 2022 assembly to be held in Indonesia later this year. To learn more about the national survey, email [globalyouthsummit.mennonite@gmail.com](mailto:globalyouthsummit.mennonite@gmail.com).

—BY CHRISTEN KONG

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# Turning dress stereotypes on their head

*Exhibit explores symbolism and meaning of Muslim and Mennonite women's head coverings*

Story and Photos by Janet Bauman  
Eastern Canada Correspondent  
KITCHENER, ONT.

**T**he vast majority of North American Mennonite and Muslim women do not wear any sort of veil or head covering. Why then do head coverings receive so much public attention? Do Muslim head coverings and Mennonite bonnets provoke the same response?

An exhibit called “Un/Coverings: Mennonite & Muslim Women’s Heads and Hearts,” now on display until April at Schneider Haus National Historic Site, in Kitchener, Ont., explores these questions.

One part of the exhibit is dedicated to showing a variety of bonnets and head coverings worn by Mennonite women. In another room, Muslim women’s clothing and veils are on display.

A lecture given at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont., by Laura

Morlock, is also featured in the exhibit. Morlock teaches dress and diversity at Ryerson University’s School of Fashion in Toronto. As a scholar of religious dress, she explores gender narratives and identity construction.

Over time and among different groups, Mennonite women’s head coverings were intended to serve the same function: modesty, conformity to the church and separation from society, based on teachings in I Corinthians 11:3-15.



*A variety of Mennonite bonnets are on display at an exhibit at Schneider Haus in Kitchener, Ont., that explores the symbolism and meaning of women’s head coverings.*



But ironies abound, as the exhibit points out. There are different standards of dress for men than for women and, while head coverings symbolize non-conformity to society, they are a symbol of conformity within the group, even though there is diversity between Mennonite groups when it comes to the style of head coverings!

In the exhibit, stereotypes and assumptions in North American society about head coverings worn by Muslim women are addressed.

According to Linda B. Arthur, a dress scholar who is quoted in the exhibit, “Symbols operate beneath the conscious level,” but it can be difficult to articulate

*(left) A variety of Muslim veils form part of the exhibit at Schneider Haus in Kitchener, Ont., entitled, ‘Un/Coverings: Mennonite & Muslim Women’s Heads and Hearts.’*

them verbally. Head coverings have caricatured Muslims, and served to “collapse a group of people into one identity,” and project onto Islam an anti-woman stereotype, while “lifting the veil” has been seen as “a metaphor for freedom and democracy.”

For many people, Muslim head coverings imply they are foreigners or outsiders, creating an “us versus them”

mentality. “Un/Coverings” turns these and other stereotypes on their head.

The display reflects that, in reality, Muslim women “represent so much variation and contrast within and beyond their communities. Their stories and identities are as complex and creative as the clothes they wear.” There are a billion Muslims in the world with diverse styles of dress; “modest chic” fashion spans the

globe. In Canada, 84 percent of Muslim women do not wear a hijab, and fewer than 200 women wear the niqab.

Muslim women are “social actors,” according to the display. They employ, create, reform and change their societies. A “static colonial image of the oppressed, veiled Muslim woman offers sharp contrast with their lived experience.” ❧

## Menno Office offers tangible support through care packages

By Gladys Terichow

Inter-Mennonite Chaplaincy Association  
WINNIPEG

University of Manitoba students who gather online for peer support, topical discussion and spiritual guidance in the E-Menno Office had an unexpected surprise during the fall term.

Students were recipients of care packages delivered to their homes by Menno Office chaplain Mark Von Kampen. The care packages, based on the theme “Mind, body and spirit” were filled with a variety of comfort items like dried soup mix in a jar, cake mix in a mug, favourite snacks, a grocery gift card, hand-written note of encouragement and more.

“It is a tangible way for churches, our board members and the people who support us to show students we love them and care about them,” says Von Kampen. “It is also a good opportunity for me to meet personally with students during this time of remote learning.”

Amid the ongoing uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic, the added stress of the 35-day strike at the U of M, and new challenges of transitioning back to classes following the strike, Menno Office continues to focus on building and maintaining a strong and vibrant campus ministry that supports students from all walks of life.

During the 2021 spring term, students participated in a video to talk about how the E-Menno Office is making a difference

in their lives.

“What they appreciate is relationships,” says Von Kampen. “They talk about Menno Office being a place to make friends and describe it as a place of refuge and sanctuary. We know that university campuses can be lonely places for students. It is a privilege for me to journey alongside students and offer hope and encouragement in a Christian context.”

Pre-COVID-19, Menno Office and other chaplaincy ministries operated out of a space on the main floor of the University Centre, but these offices sustained fire damage a few days before the university transitioned to remote learning. The university is planning to resume in-person classes for the winter term and work is underway to develop a space on the fifth floor of the University Centre for spiritual-care services.

Regardless of whether Menno Office is in a physical space or virtual space, Von Kampen strives to offer students an inviting place where they can find a sense of belonging, support and care. ❧



*Inter-Mennonite Chaplaincy board members Helen Wang, left, and Susan Reynar, centre, and Mark Von Kampen, E-Menno Office's chaplain, pack “Mind, body and spirit” care packages for University of Manitoba students who connect with Von Kampen through the E-Menno Office.*

*Menno Office is supported by Inter-Mennonite Chaplaincy Association, a partnership of Evangelical Mennonite Conference, Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference and Mennonite Church Manitoba, various church congregations, Menno Office alumni and individuals.*

# Churches leave a legacy

*Three Saskatchewan churches face decisions after closing their doors*

Story by Emily Summach  
Saskatchewan Correspondent  
SASKATCHEWAN

In 2020, three Mennonite Church Saskatchewan congregations—Zoar Mennonite Church, Waldheim; Hanley Mennonite Church; and Superb Mennonite Church, near Kerrobert—made the difficult decision to close their doors and hold their final services.

Their reasons for doing so included financial pressures, changing community demographics, and not enough people to sustainably share the responsibilities of church life.

For many people, the hardest moments were the final services; the “lasts” that they shared together. But when the hugs had been given and the goodbyes said, practical decisions and questions about legacy remained.

“Once the membership made the decision that, yes, we would close, we tried to get a sense, overall, of the big picture, of what the final year would hold,” said Liz Baerwald, former chair of Zoar Mennonite. “How do we disperse property? What do we do with the building? What about all the stuff? It makes your head spin!”

Of the process, Gary Peters, Hanley’s former pastor, said: “I’d liken it to settling a person’s estate. You have to take care of their home and all their things.”

One of the hopes the three congregations had in common was that the church buildings and assets should be put to good use and should continue to help others.

Hanley Mennonite chose to keep its property, which includes a cemetery. The building itself is currently up for sale.

“We hope that someone will buy the building and move it off the land,” said. “The graveyard is still important to us, and we had a burial there just a couple of months ago. We were able to distribute a lot of the items in the church—the furnishings and such. Most of our hymnals and library materials went to Beautiful

Feet Ministries, who give those items to churches in Zambia.”

The members of Superb Mennonite made the decision to return the land to the family of the original landholder. Mike Warkentin, the church’s former chair, said: “We offered the land back to the grandson of the man who had given the land to build the church on in 1944. He farms the land around the church and will use it for farmland, too. We decided to demolish the church building because we didn’t want him to have to deal with taking care of it.”

After all Superb’s affairs were taken care of, the remaining funds were turned into a legacy project at Camp Shekinah.

“The money to Shekinah was to be the legacy of Superb for those who were there at the beginning of the church, not so much the end. We wanted the faithfulness with which they started the church to keep going,” said Warkentin.

For Zoar Mennonite, the questions of what to do with the church building and assets proved to be a spiritual journey.

“We’ve learned that one is never led into a situation where God doesn’t provide an answer, even if it takes time,” Baerwald said. Selling the building was an ongoing process for the committee, and each possibility led to a dead end. “Many of the older



MC SASKATCHEWAN WEBSITE PHOTO

*Hanley Mennonite Church, Sask.*



PHOTO BY LIZ BAERWALD

*Zoar Mennonite Church in earlier days. The building is now owned and managed by the Town of Waldheim, Sask.*



MC SASKATCHEWAN WEBSITE PHOTO

*Superb Mennonite Church, Sask.*

people in our congregation told us to keep in mind that the building was built to serve this community, and that was still true, even if it wouldn't serve as a church."

In the end, the Town of Waldheim purchased the building to use as a community centre for events such as banquets and funerals. A preschool program continues to be run there and the town offices will move into the building

in the future.

The proceeds from the building sale allowed Zoar Mennonite to make substantial donations to Camp Shekinah, Rosthern Junior College and Mennonite Central Committee. Donations were also made to food-security programs in the region.

Baerwald offered words of wisdom to churches who are facing similar questions about closing their buildings and what

legacy they might try to leave: "Pray, pray, pray! Nothing happens quickly. . . . Pray that there is unity, and when everything is said and done there are still good relationships. That's true for us, and we're thankful to God for that." ❧

## MCC reverses decision to close Plum Coulee warehouse

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe  
Manitoba Correspondent

In January 2021, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada and MCC Manitoba declared that they would close their warehouse in Plum Coulee, Man., about 100 kilometres south of Winnipeg, and move material resource operations to New Hamburg, Ont.

The Manitoba and national MCCs jointly operated the Plum Coulee distribution centre since 2004 and MCC Manitoba didn't have the capacity to operate the

facility on its own. Several months later, however, MCC Manitoba announced that it was reversing its decision.

They had heard displeasure about the decision from supporters in southern Manitoba and encouragement for material resources activities to continue.

"There will also be 20 to 30 regular volunteers who will lose the opportunity to support MCC, as well as up to 300 volunteers for special projects . . . MCC has a

lot of support here in cash and volunteers. That should count for something!" wrote Brian Derksen, a Plum Coulee resident, in a letter published in the March 15 issue of *Canadian Mennonite*.

The warehouse's central location makes it accessible for volunteers who come from many areas in southern Manitoba and make volunteering a regular part of life.

"We knew there was passion and knew the decision would be unwelcome but didn't think logistics would be possible," says Darryl Loewen, executive director of MCC Manitoba, who had been searching for a solution right from the beginning.

Then he heard the new warehouse owners were willing to create a new lease agreement that would allow MCC Manitoba to stay open in a smaller portion of the space and that Gord Letkeman was willing to continue his work in the warehouse on a half-time basis. "That's when we realized that the pieces were there to continue this, and we were happy to do that."

Volunteer activities continue to run, including blanket making, book recycling, baling blankets and preparing materials for shipping.

"It remains an important and enjoyable part of material resource life in MCC Manitoba," Loewen says. ❧



MCC PHOTO BY PAULA HOLTZINGER

**Pictured above is a Mennonite Central Committee relief kit filled with towels, shampoo, soap and other essential items.**

# Young adults are leaving the church but not Jesus

By Christen Kong  
Special to Canadian Mennonite  
TORONTO

Depictions of God have always informed the faith of Christian believers.

Colin McCartney's new book, *Let the Light In: Healing from Distorted Images of God* (Herald Press), on the other hand, is inspired by conversations with young adults who have left the church due to negative perceptions of God and experiences with the church. However, he says he observes a hopeful trend in their responses: "Many young adults are leaving the church, but they are not leaving Jesus."

McCartney has served in urban missions for over 35 years. He currently leads Connect City Toronto and is pastor of Soul House, an urban congregation in Toronto affiliated with Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.

A new survey conducted by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) reveals a decrease in church attendance across Canadians, with many more people attending church at the age of 12 than as adults. Rick Hiemstra, the EFC's director of research, writes, "Perhaps culture is changing too fast for us to reinvent church before the culture changes again."

McCartney is grappling with similar findings and shifts. He recounts his own experience wrestling with his faith and God in trying to understand how to make sense of Jesus the Son of God in the New Testament, and an angry God in the Old Testament.

"Young adults are reluctant to live in a church that worships a God that does not reflect their experiences with Jesus," he says. "The portrayal of God that they are hearing from the church has been negative, authoritarian, inflexible and strict."

Young adults are experiencing the transformation of church culture as well as their own.

"Young people are looking for meaning outside the church because church



PHOTO BY JUDITH MCCARTNEY

**Colin McCartney, left, prays with youth in Brazil at a young Brazilian youth mission gathering.**

members have not always shown the light of God. I have felt churches become political religions," says Scott Janzen, a youth member at First Mennonite Church in Edmonton. He says that "people are using a diverse range of social media platforms to proclaim the good news and defend the Christian ethic."

McCartney suggests seeking wisdom from early church leaders like the mystics, who believed Christianity was a movement instead of a religion. He says that these Desert Fathers found refuge in the desert as a response to the shifting perspectives of God that were un-Christ-like at the time. "The desert became a sacred place, quiet and still," he says. "They were able to pray, read scripture and became a new community where people could come to experience Jesus."

"A desert place for young adults would be a gathering of Jesus followers and Jesus seekers," he says. "A place where they can ask questions and not be judged; it would be a third way."

One such third way can look like *Haverim*, a Hebrew word that conveys

fellowship, partnership, and mutual respect between friends.

McCartney describes *Haverim* as people who come together in "sacred arguments" as an act of worship, alongside prayer and Bible teaching. "This is beautiful because it is a form of discipleship and spiritual growth," he says.

Janna Murie, a youth member at Bethel Mennonite Church in Langley, B.C., says, "Young people have left their faith trying to be faithful to God and to the teachings of Scripture, but also wanting to be open."

"Desert places are sites for discerning with love," says McCartney. "For young adults, it is a place where they can convene and engage in sacred arguments and feel encouraged."

Following the publication of his book, McCartney continues to ask, "How are pastors, youth leaders and church members experiencing Jesus to become a desert place for young adults?"

"I have seen desert places at Soul House," he says. "Soul House is about arriving at a safe place, making friendships, community, serving one another, learning about Jesus, challenging distortions of God. It is about grappling, not about preaching."

McCartney continues to empower and invest in youth mentorship locally and globally, aiming to foster conversation by inviting church members and young adults to be in dialogue with one another.

Norm Dyck, mission minister with MC Eastern Canada writes in the book's afterword, "This book is a courageous challenge to all of us to reclaim Jesus as the centre of who we are and all we are called to be." ❧

To learn more visit  
[www.connectcity.org/letthelightin/](http://www.connectcity.org/letthelightin/).



# Art project brings congregation together

*Journey through wilderness is theme for panelled work*

Story and Photo by Amy Rinner Waddell

B.C. Correspondent  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

A new art project on the subject of “journey” that members of the Emmanuel Mennonite Church congregation took part in painting is now hanging above the building’s front doors.

The idea for the collaborative art project came from member Angelika Dawson, who has spearheaded previous art displays at Emmanuel, and Rachel Navarro, the new family pastor.

The congregation had been studying the Book of Exodus this past fall, and the theme of “journey” seemed to fit with the texts from Exodus 31 and 35.

The two engaged professional artist Linda Klippenstein to design something that everyone could contribute to. Church family members, from child to senior, painted portions of the panels either before or after Sunday services, or by taking individual art kits home to work on. As a whole, the picture depicts people

of different ages and ethnicities walking together.

“As a congregation, we’ve been walking in a bit of a wilderness—without a permanent lead pastor for two years, the pandemic and all the challenges that come with that—it felt like the theme of us emerging from a wilderness not only fit with the Exodus theme we were exploring in the fall, but also the journey we’ve been on,” says Dawson.

Adhering to COVID-19 protocols further complicated matters.

“That’s where the idea of multiple canvases that make up one image came from,” says Dawson. “It allowed us to have people working together but spread out. Having kits that people could take home also helped with that and allowed people who are not able to come to church to participate as well.”

The finished work was unveiled at the



PHOTO BY AMY RINNER WADDELL

*Pastor Rachel Navarro, left, and Angelika Dawson, right, reveal the finished artwork that members of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., worked on collaboratively in fall.*

Nov. 14 morning service and it is now hanging above the foyer front doors.

“[It is] a lovely reminder that, as we leave the sanctuary, we are heading out into our community, led by God,” says Dawson. ☘

## ☘ News brief

### Shekinah Retreat Centre installs electric vehicle charging station



PHOTO BY JARED REGIER)

*An electric vehicle ‘fills up’ at the charging station at the Shekinah Retreat Centre near Waldheim, Sask.*

The Shekinah Retreat Centre, located near Waldheim, Sask., is now home to an electric vehicle (EV) charging station. Shekinah, which is one of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan’s camps, had the station added to the grounds this fall. Ron Schellenberg, one of the executive directors of the camp, says it was approached by one of the camp’s supporters who said he would like to install the station. “It was an easy decision to say yes,” Schellenberg says. Jared Regier, who installed the station, is an EV owner himself. “Our family has owned an electric vehicle for the last four years and enjoyed the use of many public charging stations across the province,” he says. “Installing a charging station at Shekinah was a practical way that we could contribute to that network of charging stations and help make it easier for others to transition to cleaner transportation choices.” The station has been added to the PlugShare App, allowing other EV drivers to locate the station and “fill up.”

—BY EMILY SUMMACH

## PEOPLE

# Remembering the early days of Camp Valaqua

*George Heidebrecht, a man with 'the greatest laugh,' recalls working at the southern Alberta camp more than 50 years ago*

By Ruth Bergen Braun  
Mennonite Church Alberta

George Heidebrecht fiddled with the knobs of his slide projector in anticipation of a morning of storytelling.

Stories about Camp Valaqua. Stories of adventures he had carried for decades. Stories of boys—now men of retirement age themselves—sleeping in lean-tos, getting rain-soaked, eating over an open fire. Stories of tying their provisions to a rope and pulley system to get them across the river, and then getting themselves across the river.

Stories of experiencing God in different ways than in their lives in the city or on the farm.

A sacred space to many in Mennonite Church Alberta, Camp Valaqua gives birth to stories that pass down through generations. American historian Studs Terkel once said: “People are hungry for stories. It’s part of our very being. Storytelling is a form of history, of immortality too. It goes from one generation to another.”

Having begun as a summer outing for kids on the grounds of Mennonite Bible Institute in Didsbury, Alta., Camp Valaqua was started in 1958. Heidebrecht, now approaching his 90th birthday, remembers the energy when families worked together to try to get a camp established. In the 1960s, parents didn’t just bring their children to Camp Valaqua, leaving them there for a week, they stayed and volunteered. He laments that now parents give money more easily than time. He summarizes this enthusiasm: “When you did things for your own kids, other people’s kids also benefited.”

Heidebrecht’s fondest memories are of the wilderness camps he organized in the early 1970s: one west of Longview, at Cataract Creek, and another near the

Sheep River. Although not onsite, these “out-camps” were considered part of Valaqua’s programming. Regulations were simple in the 1970s. All he needed was the provincial warden’s permission and they could camp and hike on government land. He noted that the world operated on trust then; he was just advised to bring a gun in case of bears.

As a Camp Valaqua out-camp, he and an assistant would take up to 18 teenage boys out for some “roughing it”-type camping. They slept in lean-tos or under the stars, and cut logs for fire and benches for their devotional circles. Heidebrecht laughed, recalling one fellow who didn’t realize that punching holes in his tarp could be an issue when it rained.

One year it rained constantly during the day but was clear at night. The solution? Swap activities: Play during the night and sleep while it was raining. This weather complication did, however, warrant a visit from the warden, who offered to let them sleep in a shelter for a few nights to dry out. Seeing as the shelter had tables to write on, Heidebrecht asked each boy to write out what we’d now call a “camp evaluation.” He kept these notes and continues to treasure them today.



PHOTO BY RUTH BERGEN BRAUN

**George Heidebrecht, who was instrumental in the early days of Camp Valaqua, fiddles with his slide projector.**

Bruce Dick, a wilderness camper originally from Rosemary, was pleased to share memories and send greetings back to Heidebrecht. As a young camper, he wrote: “I liked it real lots and also appreciated how we got real close to God. I feel it was a bit wet but we had fun. . . . God blessed our experiences.”

As for remembering Heidebrecht, Dick said with a chuckle, “I remember his laugh. He had the greatest laugh.”

There was no concern about keeping parents updated on what was happening. Parents didn’t seem to worry as some do now. They delivered their sons into Heidebrecht’s care, trusting him to be sensible. Boys came from as far as Coaldale, Seven Persons (near Medicine Hat), Rosemary, Gem, Edmonton and Calgary. He didn’t



PHOTO COURTESY OF MC ALBERTA

*Around the campfire at Camp Valaqua.*



PHOTO COURTESY OF MC ALBERTA

*The short-lived Camp Valaqua horse program.*

recall any of the boys getting lonely and wishing for home—he kept them too busy.

Dick laughed, recalling some of their shenanigans as, “Wild boys having a wild time at wilderness camp.”

Another highlight was the short-lived Camp Valaqua horse program. It ran a mere two years—1968 and 1969—as those who were keen to add horses to the camping program couldn’t generate broad-based support. Heidebrecht owned six of the horses, other parents bought horses to add to the camp stable, and he made arrangements to board others during the camp season so campers could enjoy trail rides.

time after putting up the fence posts and wire, these boys were charged with taking them back down again.

Lawrence Braul, one of the Foothills Adventure Club boys, recalls being thrilled that he could spend time with his uncle as a young teenager. He felt like he was a vital part of the Valaqua program. “We surprised ourselves with what we could do,” he says.

A common thread in Heidebrecht’s stories was how he challenged himself and others to do things they’d never done before. He is grateful that Valaqua has become a community and that generations of his family, and many others, continue

to enjoy the space and activities.

Heidebrecht often worked side by side with the late John Schellenberg, whose son Jeff continues to work at Camp Valaqua as manager. Their last time together was spent looking at old camp photos, swapping memories.

Heidebrecht still has “the greatest laugh.” ❧

❧ **News brief**

**Grebel president reappointed**



**Marcus Shantz** has been reappointed as the president of Conrad Grebel University College for a second five-year term. The announcement was made

on Dec. 16, 2021, by board chair Paul Fieguth, who said the reappointment was “supported enthusiastically and unanimously by the board. The reappointment committee solicited and received input from a great many people, and there was overwhelming appreciation for Marcus’s leadership. We are looking forward to his continued contributions to the broader Grebel community.” Shantz was praised “as a community builder” and was “commended for overseeing the successful completion of the most recent building campaign.”

“In the next few years, I think we have a real opportunity to connect Grebel to big issues playing out at the university and in the wider world,” said Shantz. “We’re part of a university that is largely focused on advancing technology—and we confront big questions about the impact of technology on the human condition. Seen in this light, Grebel’s offerings in peace, music, history and theology have never been more relevant. I’m looking forward to finding new ways for Grebel to serve our university and community, and in finding partners who are interested in what we have to offer.” Shantz has served Grebel as president since October 2017 and will begin his second term in 2022.

—CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

# This is your family

By Tany Warkentin

**H**ave you ever been introduced to a distant relative for the first time—maybe you didn't even know that person existed—and yet you immediately felt a connection with them? After all, they are family!

As part of a global Anabaptist family, we have family members all around the world, most of whom we have never met,

yet we have deep bonds that connect us, deeper than our last name, cultural foods or language. We share bonds of common belief and commitment to following Christ, and ways in which our churches relate and work together.

These stories are our stories, as Mennonite churches across Canada support these ministries which are

strengthening the churches in the Congo, Angola and Burkina Faso. And these people are our family! ☞

PHOTO BY TANY WARKENTIN

*(Right) Josué, standing, is a young electrician called by the Mennonite church in Burkina Faso to start a hardware store in the village of Mahon. Many business owners in Burkina Faso have set up hardware stores or bookstores in villages where there are no churches. Through their positive Christian witness, neighbours have come to know Christ and churches were planted. This is the prayer and hope of the Burkina Faso church for Josué's store in Mahon.*



PHOTO BY LYNDA HOLLINGER-JANZEN

*Tany Warkentin, left, is pictured with Adolphine, Marie and Hélène José, supervisors of the literacy program run by the Mennonite churches in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Literacy teachers are trained and provided with basic teaching supplies, and they then offer classes in their own village to women and children who haven't had opportunities to attend school.*

PHOTO BY TANY WARKENTIN

*(Right) This young woman learned to read in one of the Congolese literacy centres, and she is reading the Bible in her own language. Despite her physical disability, learning to read and write has boosted her self-confidence and opened new job opportunities.*



PHOTO BY TANY WARKENTIN

(Right) Pastor Ambeké, left, prepares to help Daniel take his place as the general secretary of one of the Mennonite conferences in Angola. This is the first time this conference will have had a peaceful leadership transition since it began in 1983. Ambeké said, "Some of our young people have grown up thinking that the only way to change leaders is through tension and force. Usually, new leaders are selected from senior leaders who are not leading good lives. But this time, the church has called this "Little David" because he has the right character. He is humble and he is the one we want, even if he is young."



PHOTO BY TANY WARKENTIN

Laurent, left, is a part of a youth association in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, created by a group of 10 incredibly motivated young people looking for work in a country with high unemployment rates. Each member contributes 25,000 francs (\$12) at the end of each month, and then they take turns receiving 90 percent of the money for personal agricultural projects. The group uses the remaining 10 percent to collectively plant, harvest and sell peanuts, with the profit being added to the collective fund. As this fund grows, the youth association will invest in larger and more long-term agricultural projects.



PHOTO BY TANY WARKENTIN

The Grade 4 students at the Mennonite school in Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, send their enthusiastic greetings.

Tany Warkentin is liaison to ministry in Africa for Mennonite Church Canada; she recently returned from a trip to Burkina Faso and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where she represented MC Canada at AIMM partnership meetings. She also serves as pastoral leader of Springridge Mennonite Church, in Pincher Creek, Alta. These photos were originally posted on the MC Alberta website on Nov. 17, 2021 (<https://bit.ly/3FknTee>).

# 'Gratitude abounds' at retirement celebration for Rockway's principal

By Janet Bauman  
Eastern Canada Correspondent  
KITCHENER, ONT.

**W**ith laughter and tears, stories and good music, family, friends, colleagues and students past and present celebrated Ann L. Schultz's retirement from Rockway Mennonite Collegiate on Nov. 28. With some people in-person at the school, including a safely distanced choir, and hundreds more joining the live stream, it was a time to offer gratitude for what Schultz described as a 30-year career "I couldn't have imagined."

Rockway, currently serving students from grades 7 to 12, has been a big part of Schultz's life. She graduated from there in 1985 and then joined the faculty in 1991 as a junior-high music, French and religious studies teacher. She went on to serve as Rockway's music department head from 1997 to 2012, before serving as principal from 2013 to 2021.

Board vice-chair Mark Diller Harder facilitated the retirement celebration.

Former students Jenny Enns Modolo and Justin Martin, who now teaches at Rockway, gave a light-hearted tour of Schultz's relationship with Rockway by singing snippets from musicals Schultz had directed over the years at Rockway. Other tributes came from family members, and former and current colleagues.

As a teacher, Schultz was honoured as someone who set high standards for her students and helped them achieve their best. As a department head and later as principal, she was recognized for her highly organized, detail-oriented approach, as well as her commitment to work collaboratively and hear all perspectives, discern thoughtfully and make careful decisions.

As many speakers noted in their tributes, Schultz had an unwavering passion and vision for the school, one she described as "honouring the past, living and celebrating

the present, and making bold and courageous changes for the future."

As a self-described administrative geek who finds strategic planning "inspirational," Schultz said her love for new initiatives meant she thrived on "creating a plan and striving to implement it." Among the most significant for her were reinvigorating Spiritual Emphasis Week, as well as launching a family breakfast, business courses, restorative justice practices and discerning with the school community, and a gender sexuality alliance to work on creating a safer and more inclusive school for everyone at Rockway.

Always aware of changing times, Schultz emphasizes that Rockway's vision of integrating sound academics with growth in character and faith remains as important today as it did in 1945 when the school was founded. It has been an "incredible honour to serve," said Schultz in her closing remarks. "Gratitude abounds for what has been, what is and what is to become."

Schultz used the metaphor of a musical prelude, with its new and recurring motifs, to describe her 30-year story with Rockway.

As a tangible tribute in honour of Schultz, a legacy Prelude Fund has been set up to "usher in a new era of music at Rockway." It is meant to be the beginning of what is hoped can be "a larger campaign to support music with additional resources and new classroom and performance space."

As Schultz's own prelude at Rockway comes to an end, "the future blooms with possibility," she said.

Schultz plans to take some intentional time for rest and connecting with loved ones, and then follow the advice of a friend who said, "Wait to see what finds you." ❧



PHOTO BY CHARLES KRUGER

**Rockway alumni Jenny Enns Modolo, left, and Justin Martin sing snippets from musicals that Ann Schultz directed during her career at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener, Ont., as part of retirement celebrations for Ann Schultz on Nov. 28.**

# A pastor in the digital age

*Lisa Martens Bartel pastors a church 1,300 kilometres away, exclusively online*

By Emily Summach  
Saskatchewan Correspondent  
DRAKE, SASK.

Over the course of the pandemic, many pastors and church leaders have grumbled about the woes of technology and the rise of Zoom worship gatherings. But for Lisa Martens Bartel, the move to online worship provided an unexpected ministry opportunity.

“I received an email through our farm’s website, completely out of the blue,” she says. That email came from First Mennonite Church in Kelowna, B.C.

The pastor was moving on and the congregation was hoping to find another pastor for the interim, while the church discerned its own future directions.

“It was a quick process,” she says. “I think it was about a week-and-a-half from the time I received that email to the time we agreed this was a good fit for everyone and drew up an agreement for me to serve as the pastor.”

Martens-Bartel and her family live in Drake, Sask., and own a busy market farm operation.

In her role with First Mennonite, she plans worship gatherings, including choosing litanies, music and preaching the sermon, all over Zoom. There are usually 12 to 15 households on the screen for services. Because of pandemic constraints, Martens-Bartel has never been to Kelowna, or met a single member of her congregation in person.

“One of the challenges at the beginning was how do I get to know people when I can’t visit them or have coffee together?” she says.

“I started doing a question of the week at the start of each service. I asked things like, ‘Where have you all lived?’ ‘What are your hobbies?’ People were very willing to share and chat, and that gave me a good snapshot of who people are.”

For Martens Bartel, her role at First gave

her a chance to test the waters of pastoral ministry, a vocation that she hopes to pursue in the future.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LISA MARTENS BARTEL

*Lisa Martens Bartel preaches to her congregation in Kelowna, B.C., via Zoom from her home in Drake, Sask.*

“It’s given me the chance to try out pastoral ministry,” she says. “There aren’t a lot of ways to do that in rural Saskatchewan, and our farm operation doesn’t allow for much travelling. I’ve been able to test my own call. By preaching week in and out, I’ve learned how to find a rhythm, and what I need to be doing. I’ve felt affirmed in my calling in my work with Kelowna, and they’ve been so kind and appreciative.”

Grace Kroeker, the worship chair at First, agrees with the assessment.

“We have good success with Lisa as our virtual pastor,” Kroeker says. “She is good to work with, and we try to keep in touch by phone, Zoom or email. As long as our equipment is working well, we have no problems.”

Technology issues have proven to be one of the bigger challenges of the arrangement. Kroeker offers some advice for other churches that might be considering a similar arrangement. “Make sure you have a tech person,” she says with a laugh. “We’ve become pretty good at our set-up, but it’s always a bit uptight on Sunday mornings.”

And while many of the duties of a pastor translate well over Zoom, there are downfalls with the lack of a physical presence. Pastoral care is difficult to do from two provinces away.

“When there is a death in the congregation or a funeral happens, or something like that, it’s hard to do that kind of connecting over Zoom,” Martens Bartel says. “I want to be able to be there, in person, for them.”

She will remain in her role as pastor of First Mennonite through the end of April 2022, when work on her farm kicks into high gear again.

Her time spent in this unique arrangement has given her insights into some of the bigger movements of the Church. “I think a hybrid [in-person and online] church is the future,” she says. “It allows people to come to church without having to be vulnerable right away; they can watch anonymously at first. It allows more people to access church too, like people who are housebound. There are lots of opportunities through online platforms that we haven’t explored, more ways that we can be the ‘Big C’ church together.” ☞

## OBITUARY

# Pastor, conference leader dies at 96

*Jake Tiltzky (b. Oct. 21, 1925; d. Nov. 9, 2021)*

By Amy Rinner Waddell  
B.C. Correspondent  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

**J**acob “Jasch” Tiltzky, longtime pastor and leader in Mennonite Church British Columbia and the wider Mennonite church family, died on Nov. 9 in Abbotsford.

He was born in Gruenfeld, Ukraine, on October 21, 1925, the youngest of eight children, and immigrated to Waldheim, Sask., with his parents when he was less than a year old. The family moved to B.C. eight years later and became part of West Abbotsford Mennonite Church.

He was baptized in 1947 at West Abbotsford and he soon was called to various ministries of the church: Sunday school, daily Vacation Bible School, youth leadership and choir director. He studied at Bethel Bible Institute, Mennonite Brethren Bible College, Canadian Mennonite Bible College and Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

As a teenager, Tiltzky spent the summer of 1942 installing the runway lights at the Abbotsford airport. Always an aviation buff, he would often visit the Canadian Museum of Flight in Langley, B.C., in his retirement years.

On Nov. 22, 1952, he married Erna Derksen, whom he had met as a child in 1936. Together, they created a beautiful home on 1.2 hectares of land on Queen Street in Abbotsford, and lived there for 54 years. In January 2020 they moved to the Mayfair Senior Living and Care facility.

In 1963, Jake and Erna were called to the newly formed Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church to serve as a pastoral couple in 1963. Here Jake was affectionately called “JT.” He served as pastor at Eben-Ezer until 1977 and again from 1982 to 1990. During that time he performed hundreds of baptisms and weddings.

He also served as interim pastor of Port Hardy, Sherbrooke, Bethel and Eden Mennonite churches and helped start



MENNONITE LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES PHOTO

***In this 1983 photo, Jake Tiltzky, left, moderator of the General Conference Mennonite Church, and Ross Bender, moderator of the (Old) Mennonite Church, lay their separate stones on the one stone (symbolizing Jesus Christ), as the two denominations moved toward union.***

Langley Mennonite Fellowship.

He chaired the Conference of Mennonites in B.C. from 1963 to 1966 and again from 1969 to 1971. Other leadership positions included serving as conference representative for Mennonite Church Canada, chairing the General Conference Mennonite Church North America, and as conference representative to Mennonite World Conference.

Through the years he had service opportunities in Mennonite colonies in Mexico, *Umsiedler* ministries in Germany, in the former Soviet Union and in South America.

In his retirement he enjoyed playing

tennis and golf, and built model airplanes, but he also continued in ministry by serving as interim pastor in several congregations.

A service of remembrance was held on Nov. 18 at Eben-Ezer Mennonite. He is survived by Erna, his wife of 69 years.

Commenting on Tiltzky’s life, Garry Janzen, MC B.C.’s executive minister, said: “The ministry of Jake Tiltzky with the Mennonite church extended from the local church, nationwide and globally. . . We are so thankful.” ✎

## /// Staff changes

### Pastoral transitions in Ontario



**Ken**, left, and **Dawne Driedger** began as interim pastors at Preston and Wanner Mennonite churches, in November 2021, serving both congregations alongside Kyong Jung Kim, while Danielle Raimbault is on maternity leave. Ken earned a bachelor of religious education degree from Ontario Bible College, attended Ontario Theological Seminary and Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, and graduated from Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., with a master of theological studies degree. Most recently, he served as interim pastor of North Leamington United Mennonite Church. Previously, he also served as pastor at two Methodist churches in Pennsylvania, and co-pastored with Dawne at Zion Mennonite Fellowship in Elmira Ont., and at Wideman Mennonite Church in Markham, Ont. Dawne earned a master of theological studies degree from Grebel in 2013; she served as Milverton Mennonite Fellowship's interim pastor from 2014 to 2016.



**Stephen Reist** began in November 2021 as interim pastor of Danforth Mennonite Church in Toronto. He earned a master's degree in theological studies from Wycliff College at the University of Toronto and was ordained in the Church of Christ. He pastored at Churchill Meadows Christian Church for 18 months before becoming the pastor of Mississauga Mennonite Fellowship, where he served for the past 13 years. He also has 11 years of experience in the field of information technology. He says, "I look forward to journeying with Danforth Mennonite Church in this important

time as they, with God's help, seek to acknowledge the past, understand their identity and discern their future."



**Dave Rogalsky** began as the supply pastor of Community Mennonite Fellowship in Drayton, Ont., in November 2021 after serving as supply pastor of Bloomingdale Mennonite Church. He previously served in long-term and interim pastoral assignments in Mennonite Church Manitoba and MC Eastern Canada, and as interim pastor at the Church of the Good Shepherd (Swedenborgian), in Kitchener, Ont. He also spent 12 years as the Eastern Canada correspondent for *Canadian Mennonite*. He says he "enjoys the challenge of learning new congregational cultures and trying to help congregations be whom they see God calling them to be as they prepare for a new pastoral leader."

—BY JANET BAUMAN

### MC Saskatchewan announces interim executive minister



**Josh Wallace** has been hired to serve as the interim executive minister of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan. He has served as the regional church's church engagement minister since 2020. "I'm excited to continue walking along with our churches through this season of transition," says Wallace. "I'm looking forward to continuing to collaborate with the other regional church leaders and being inspired by what God is doing across the country." Wallace is completing his doctor of ministry degree through Northern Seminary in Chicago, Ill. He will begin his interim role on January 1, 2022. Ryan Siemens, the outgoing executive minister, will conclude his work on Jan. 31. The MC Saskatchewan council has begun searching for someone to fill this role permanently.

—BY EMILY SUMMACH

### Pastoral transition in British Columbia



**Jorge Hoajaca** began serving as Pastor of discipleship and administration: English and Spanish ministries at Sherbrooke Mennonite Church in Vancouver. Hoajaca has worked with diverse populations such as refugees, survivors of domestic abuse, single mothers and the Spanish church. He earned a bachelor's degree in Hispanic ministries and communications from Goshen (Ind.) College. Previously, he was pastor of First United Spanish Mennonite Church in Vancouver and has been serving at the Sherbrooke food bank for 30 years. He enjoys spending time with his wife Ericka, and their children and grandchildren. He was installed at Sherbrooke on Nov. 28, 2021.

—BY AMY DUECKMAN

### Pastoral transition in Manitoba



**Rudy Franz** began serving as intentional interim pastor at Carman (Man.) Mennonite Church on Nov. 1, 2021. He will serve in this half-time position until Dec. 31, 2022. Franz earned a master of divinity degree from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind. He comes to the role with extensive experience in pastoral ministry. In June 2020, he retired from Blumenort Mennonite Church in Rosetown, Man., where he pastored for 14 years. Before that, he was pastor at Gretna Berghthaler Mennonite Church in Gretna, Man., from 1989 to 2006. He is filling this transitional period after the departure of Rachel Siemens, who previously served as Carman Mennonite's pastor for three years.

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

**Study the Bible.  
Seek wisdom.  
Nurture your  
faith.**



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University College**

## Calendar

### British Columbia

**Feb. 12:** The Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. and the Canadian Musical Theatre Company present *Pier 21: The Musical*, at the Matsqui Centennial Auditorium, Abbotsford, at 3 and 6:30 p.m. For tickets, visit [www.mhsbc.com](http://www.mhsbc.com) or call 604-853-6177.

**February 26:** Mennonite Church British Columbia annual general meeting, to be held online. To register, contact your congregation's office.

### Alberta

**March 18-19:** Mennonite Church Alberta annual delegate sessions, at First Mennonite Church, Calgary.

### Saskatchewan

**Jan. 22:** Mega Menno one-day winter retreat, at Shekinah Retreat Centre, Waldheim, Sask. For more information, email [youthminister@mcsask.ca](mailto:youthminister@mcsask.ca).

**March 12:** Mennonite Church Saskatchewan annual delegate session, at Youth Farm Bible Camp, Rosthern.

### Manitoba

**Ongoing:** Join an MC Manitoba gratitude group every second week for six weeks on Zoom, for 40 minutes of gathering with others in encouragement and sharing gratitude. Leader: Laura Funk, MC Manitoba's spiritual director-in-residence. For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/2YbxzRf>.

### Ontario

**Feb. 24:** MCC Ontario will celebrate more than 100 years of relief, development and peace in the name of Christ with best-selling author Malcolm Gladwell, at Bingemans Conference Centre in Kitchener, at 6 p.m. To purchase tickets, visit [powerofpartnership.ca](http://powerofpartnership.ca). Options include to attend in person or virtually. All funds raised will support MCC's efforts in Ontario and worldwide.

**Until March 7:** "Not Traumatic Enough for a Shock Blanket" exhibit at the Grebel Gallery, Conrad Grebel University College. For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/3G4MBjD>.

**April 19:** "Diverse paths: An exploration of Low German Mennonite experiences," at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo. The conference will bring together members of Low German-speaking communities and those who work within those communities, including service providers, educators and academics. To learn more, visit <https://bit.ly/3vvNaOx>.

## Pastors & Leaders | Deep Faith 2022

### *Formed in the Wilderness, Leading in Hope*

A joint conference of AMBS and Mennonite Church USA Faith Formation

Monday, Feb. 21, 7 p.m. – Thursday, Feb. 24, 12:30 p.m. (ET)

At Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana. Also available online!

#### Speakers

- › **Opening Address:** **Sibonokuhle Ncube**, PhD, AMBS MDiv student; social justice advocate; development, humanitarian relief, and peace practitioner
- › **Teaching Sessions:** **Eleanor Kreider**, MMus, theologian; church musician; retired missionary
- › **Bible Studies:** **Tom Yoder Neufeld**, ThD, Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies and Theological Studies at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ontario
- › **Sending Sermon:** **Rolando Sosa Granados**, MDiv, Pastor at Piedra Viva Mennonite Church, Elkhart; therapist for children and adolescents



For more information, visit:  
[amsb.ca/pastorsandleaders](http://amsb.ca/pastorsandleaders)



/// Classifieds

Global Anabaptist Health Network, a Mennonite World Conference affiliated health network, is seeking a part-time volunteer to coordinate its global program. Please send resume to [ronyoder@comcast.net](mailto:ronyoder@comcast.net).

**Employment Opportunities**



Employment opportunity  
**Pastor of Worship and Outreach**  
(full-time)

**About us**  
We are neighborhood church in east Richmond, B.C. with strong ties to our community. We are on a journey of revitalization and growth, seeking to share Christ as the center of our faith and to live out our missional identity as ministers of reconciliation and peace in a changing world.

**About the role**  
This exciting new role combines worship with community engagement and outreach to help bring our missional vision to life. Send a cover letter and resume to [pastorsearch@peacemennonite.ca](mailto:pastorsearch@peacemennonite.ca) by 31 January 2022. Visit our website at [www.peacemennonite.ca](http://www.peacemennonite.ca) for more about the opportunity.



Employment Opportunity  
**Director of Leadership**

Mennonite Church Manitoba invites applications for the Director of Leadership position. Please send cover letter and resumé to [office@mennochurch.mb.ca](mailto:office@mennochurch.mb.ca). For more information about the position, visit [www.mennochurch.mb.ca/get-involved](http://www.mennochurch.mb.ca/get-involved) or contact Michael Pahl at [mpahl@mennochurch.mb.ca](mailto:mpahl@mennochurch.mb.ca). Review of applications will begin February 1, 2022. Position open until filled.



**Have an employment opportunity to post?**  
Advertise in *Canadian Mennonite* and get the results you're after.

Contact [advert@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:advert@canadianmennonite.org) for more information on advertising in print and digital.



Employment Opportunity  
**Executive Minister (MC B.C.)**

Mennonite Church British Columbia (MC B.C.) is looking for an **Executive Minister (EM)** to work with the MC B.C. Leadership Board to shape and implement the mission and vision of MC B.C.

The EM will help foster and sustain spiritually vibrant congregations and develop and mentor leaders. The chosen candidate will be someone who assists in shaping, defining, and cultivating MC B.C.'s Anabaptist vision of faith for today. The EM will build healthy connections, grow community, and meaningfully engage with our culture and God's world in transformative ways.

Ideal start date is Summer 2022 for handover with the current EM.

Find the job description here: [mcbc.ca/article/12064](http://mcbc.ca/article/12064)

The application deadline is **February 15, 2022**.

Please send cover letter and resume to [emstg@mcbc.ca](mailto:emstg@mcbc.ca).

All interested are encouraged to apply, and only the applicants that meet the expectations of the role will be contacted.

**FACULTY POSITION IN ANABAPTIST AND MENNONITE HISTORY**

Conrad Grebel University College at the University of Waterloo invites applications for a full-time tenure-track faculty position in Anabaptist and Mennonite History that involves teaching, scholarship, service, and community education. The successful candidate will have general teaching and scholarship expertise in Anabaptist and Mennonite History, and the ability to offer cross-disciplinary courses in one of the college's other programs is preferred. The appointment will begin July 1, 2022. The College will begin reviewing applications on February 7, 2022.

The College is committed to employment equity and welcomes applications from all qualified persons. Canadian citizens and permanent residents will be given priority. For further information about the College, department, position description, and application procedures, see [www.grebel.ca/positions](http://www.grebel.ca/positions)





PHOTOS BY JOHN LONGHURST

*As part of the clean-up in Princeton, B.C., Mennonite Disaster Service volunteer Alvin Klassen emerges from a basement with a damaged chair.*